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# Security Council

Seventy-second year

*Provisional*

## 7920th meeting

Tuesday, 11 April 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

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| *President*: | Mrs. Haley/Ms. Sison | (United States of America) |
| *Members*: | Bolivia (Plurinational State of) | Mr. Llorentty Solíz |
| | China | Mr. Liu Jieyi |
| | Egypt | Mr. Aboulatta |
| | Ethiopia | Mr. Alemu |
| | France | Mr. Lamek |
| | Italy | Mr. Lambertini |
| | Japan | Mr. Kawamura |
| | Kazakhstan | Mr. Sadykov |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Iliichev |
| | Senegal | Mr. Seck |
| | Sweden | Mr. Skau |
| | Ukraine | Mr. Yelchenko |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Mr. Wilson |
| | Uruguay | Mr. Rosselli |

## Agenda

The question concerning Haiti

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (S/2017/223)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

## Expression of condolence on the terrorist attacks in Egypt

**The President**: Allow me to extend our condolences to our friends in Egypt. What we saw happen was devastating because it happened in the most sacred of places, where people go to feel safe, to feel comfort and to find peace. Our thoughts and prayers are with all of the people of Egypt, and we stand in mourning with them.

## Adoption of the agenda

*The agenda was adopted.*

## The question concerning Haiti

### Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (S/2017/223)

**The President**: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico, Peru, Spain and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Sandra Honoré, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Her Excellency Ms. Joanne Adamson, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/223, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti.

I now give the floor to Ms. Honoré.

**Ms. Honoré**: I would like to express my gratitude to the United States presidency of the Security Council for convening today's meeting on Haiti.

(*spoke in French*)

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the presence of the Permanent Representative of Haiti.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

I should like to thank, in particular, all the countries that contribute troops and police to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), and all Member States assisting in the stabilization process in Haiti.

(*spoke in English*)

Six months ago, in the aftermath of the passage of the devastating Hurricane Matthew, when I last briefed the Security Council (see S/PV.7789), we called for solidarity with the Government and people of Haiti as the country struggled to keep on track an electoral process, which was critical to the consolidation of its stability. Today, as a result of the successful holding of elections on 20 November 2016 and 29 January 2017, Haiti's political outlook for 2017 and beyond has significantly improved, with the opening of a crucial window of opportunity to address the root causes of the political crisis that preceded the polls. The elections provided for the installation of directly elected officials at all levels of Haiti's governance structure for the first time since 2006, including the peaceful transfer of power to the third democratically elected President since the deployment of MINUSTAH to Haiti in 2004.

In contrast with the parliamentary dysfunction registered in 2015, all 119 Lower Chamber members have been elected, and all but one of the 30 senators have been seated. Among those are four women, and the fiftieth legislature has been functioning regularly since the opening of the second legislative year on 9 January. Municipal authorities have been in place almost a year now, and the publication of final results for local elections is imminent. Following the inauguration of Haiti's fifty-eighth President, Jovenel Moïse, on 7 February, Prime Minister Jack Guy Lafontant and his Cabinet assumed their functions after parliamentary endorsement on 22 March. Haiti's return to constitutional order and the full functioning of the executive, the legislature and local Government has now set the stage to address the many pressing challenges facing the country.

A relatively stable security situation prevails, despite continuous signs of fragility. The Haitian National Police (HNP), now 14,000 strong, has demonstrated increased capacity in the planning and execution of complex operations, including the securing of the elections, while simultaneously performing routine tasks in combating crime and more effectively maintaining public order. The further development of the National Police, including in the areas of internal management and oversight, the police-to-population ratio and geographic coverage, will have to occur within the framework of the new five-year strategic development plan 2017-2021 in order to ensure the sustainability of the law enforcement body.

To that end, international support, including from the United Nations, will be needed to enable the HNP to eventually provide security for all Haitian citizens. I have called on the Government to continue prioritizing the further professionalization and the provision of financial and material resources to the HNP, despite its stated intention to reconstitute a national defence force. The preservation by the Government of the apolitical character of the police will be particularly critical to the credibility of the institution and its ability to serve all Haitian citizens.

Political challenges remain the primary impediment to consistent progress in the administration of justice and human rights to truly anchor the rule of law and render police work more effective while creating conditions conducive for foreign and domestic investment and job creation.

The justice and human rights system continues to suffer from multiple deficiencies, including a lack of popular confidence, accountability, limited institutional capacity, high rates of prolonged pre-trial detention and inhumane detention conditions. These deficiencies call for a renewed engagement of the executive and the legislative alike to devise a comprehensive reform package that can finally tackle these long-standing hurdles to stability and development. In that context, the discontinuation of the mandate of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Haiti is regrettable, and I continue to call on the Government to nominate a ministerial-level focal point for human rights and to expedite the transparent and merit-based appointment of the National Ombudsperson, even as the United Nations monitoring role of the human rights situation continues.

Equally, the outcome of the recent action taken to fill key appointments in the Supreme Court and the Superior Council of the Judiciary is eagerly awaited as important steps to fully restore the judiciary and underpin its independence from the executive and legislative powers.

The resolution of Haiti's protracted politico-electoral crisis has established the political space and institutional stability needed for Haiti's democratic institutions to develop a constructive and forward-looking agenda to deliver tangible results that respond to the diverse expectations of the Haitian people, in the wake of post-hurricane reconstruction and a difficult economic situation, while addressing the root causes of weak governance and recurring political crisis. This will be critical in order to establish conditions conducive to lasting stability and sustainable development, also in view of MINUSTAH's transition.

In that regard, I am encouraged by the President's calls and those of Haitian political, civil society and private sector leaders in support of a genuine dialogue on a concrete road map for progress in key areas, including the identification of clear development priorities and the consolidation of the rule of law. It will be important that this road map be driven by the desire to enhance service delivery of the State and the confidence among Haitian citizens in the democratic institutions.

The United Nations in Haiti looks forward to intensifying our cooperation with all Haitian stakeholders as they identify and implement those national priorities. I am also encouraged by the calls from a broad cross-section of Haitian society for constitutional reform to, among other things, simplify the electoral cycle and strengthen legal oversight bodies with a view to stabilizing the country's democratic institutions and reforming its governance.

The progress achieved during the past 13 years in Haiti's stabilization process is notable. It is therefore timely to reshape the partnership among the international community, the United Nations and Haiti with a view to ensuring the sustainability of that progress. It is with this in mind that the Secretary-General has recommended the closure of MINUSTAH in six months from now and the establishment of a smaller peacekeeping operation with concentrated focus on the rule of law and police development, with strong good offices and human rights monitoring roles.

With the Council's support, the transition from MINUSTAH to a new and smaller mission would be guided by a joint transition plan that would underpin the gradual transfer of tasks to the Government, international partners and the United Nations country team. Government leadership and joint ownership will be as crucial to a sustainable transition process that underpins the implementation of the Secretary-General's recommendation for the future of the United Nations presence in the country, as will be a shift in focus of the international community's support away from stabilization to institutional strengthening.

(*spoke in French*)

I encourage the President of the Republic and the new Government and Parliament to implement a programme of institutional reforms aimed at strengthening governance at all levels and addressing the most pressing political and socioeconomic problems.

(*spoke in English*)

In the same vein, I can on Haiti's international partners to forge a renewed partnership with the Haitian authorities and the Haitian people and to lend their support to assist the authorities in implementing those reforms in a coordinated manner that helps to consolidate the gains already achieved.

I thank all my colleagues in MINUSTAH and the United Nations country team for their dedication and commitment during this critical period for Haiti, and I thank all of Haiti's international partners for their continuous support in assisting the country to fully seize this exceptional opportunity to begin a new chapter in Haiti's history as the Mission transitions.

**The President**: I thank Ms. Honoré for her briefing, her leadership and her service.

I now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

**Mr. Rosselli** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, Madam, I join in your expressions of condolence over the attack that took place in Egypt. We offer our sorrow, solidarity and commitment to continuing to fight all manifestations of terrorism and barbaric extremism.

I thank you for convening this debate on the question of Haiti. I also particularly thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Sandra Honoré, not only for her comprehensive briefing but also for dedicated work and leadership of the United Nations activities in Haiti.

Uruguay associated itself with the statement to be pronounced by the Permanent Representative of Peru on behalf of the Group of Friends of Haiti.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General of 17 March (S/2017/223), presenting the findings of the multidisciplinary strategic assessment mission carried out in early February under the leadership of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The assessment was produced at a moment of great importance for Haiti, since the newly elected President was inaugurated on 7 February, marking the return of the country to constitutional order. We therefore congratulate the people of Haiti, President Jovenel Moïse, Prime Minister Jack Guy Lafontant and the new Government team, wishing them success in this new stage of such importance to Haiti.

Haiti has been facing huge difficulties, including serious natural disasters, and has yet to overcome numerous and complex challenges in strengthening its democracy, political stability, the rule of law and the Haitian National Police, protecting human rights and promoting economic and social development. Haiti no doubt still needs the international community's assistance to make the structural reforms necessary to achieve sustainable development. It is also evident that the situation in Haiti is not as we found it 13 years ago, when the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) was established. Security is among the sectors that has seen progress, including the increased capacities and growing professionalization of the Haitian National Police.

We believe that part of our responsibility consists in determing the best way to support Haiti in the current situation. In that regard, the strategic assessment mission has provided important factors for evaluation. These indicate that there is no reason today for MINUSTAH to remain in Haiti beyond 15 October. They also show that the current needs of the country require another type of United Nations presence and another type of support. We are aware of the recommendation for the establishment of a new mission with the main function of assisting the Government of Haiti in the institutional strengthening of the rule of law, supporting and strengthening the Haitian National Police and monitoring, reporting and analysing the human rights situation .

The issue of cholera in Haiti deserves special mention. We welcomed with great satisfaction the new

United Nations approach to cholera, and in our capacity as Chair of the Group of Friends of Haiti, we coordinated the efforts towards the adoption of General Assembly resolution 71/161, which welcomed that new approach. Today, we also welcome the references to cholera contained in the report of the Secretary-General, in particular the reference to the certain political role for the new mission, in complement to the efforts of the United Nations country team.

In conclusion, we wish to reaffirm Uruguay's commitment to and solidarity with Haiti. Uruguay has been on the ground at its side since MINUSTAH was launched in 2004, contributing, at the time of its greatest deployment, two battalions, a maritime unit, an air force unit, police officers and staff officials. In the conviction that a military presence is not needed in Haiti today, Uruguayan troops will withdraw from the country on 15 april. and will do so with a sense of fulfillment.

I also wish to reiterate our public recognition of the work of all MINUSTAH personnel, especially the women and men of my country who are deployed or will be deployed to it, and our heartfelt recollection of all those who have lost their lives in the line of duty. All have demonstrated throughour the past 13 years their dedication and commitment to the recovery and stability of Haiti.

**Mr. Alemu** (Ethiopia): Madam President, you spoke on behalf of all of us when you expressed condolences to our colleagues of Egypt on the barbaric terrorist slaughter of innocent Egyptians. On behalf of my Government, I condemn this heinous terrorist attack. We will continue to stand with Egypt in this struggle.

We thank Special Representative Ms. Sandra Honoré for her briefing on the most recent developments in Haiti and on the activities of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). We take this opportunity to express appreciation to her, as well as to the civilian and military personnel of MINUSTAH, for all their efforts in carrying out their mandate of restoring a secure and stable environment to promote the political process, strengthening Government institutions and rule-of-law structures, as well as promoting and protecting human rights in Haiti.

In that regard, we welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/223), which notes the progress made in consolidating democracy and stability in Haiti. The holding of the presidential elections in a peaceful and orderly manner, in spite of the post-hurricane challenges, and the inauguration of Mr. Jovenel Moïse as President of the Republic marked a significant milestone in the restoration of constitutional order in Haiti.

We also take note of the report on the progress made in the overall security situation in the country, which remains relatively stable in spite of tensions observed during the electoral process, such as public protests and disturbances in Port-au-Prince and its environs. It is also encouraging that the Haitian National Police has improved its performance in terms of crime prevention and response, as well as public order management, which contributed to creating a stable environment for the holding of the elections.

Nevertheless, we understand the challenges that the Haitian National Police continues to face, as highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General and strengthening, professionalizing and reforming it remains a work in progress. We also note the challenges in terms of justice reform. There is therefore a need for sustained international support in that and other areas and we recognize the work that has been done by MINUSTAH to provide the necessary assistance in that regard. Ethiopia is one of the MINUSTAH police-contributing countries and we are pleased to have made a very modest contribution to those efforts.

After the 2010 earthquake, Hurricane Matthew also had a devastating impact on the Haitian people, causing a serious humanitarian crisis. That was further compounded by the outbreak of the cholera epidemic and we note the apologies by former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on behalf of the United Nations for not having done enough to contain the spread of that disease. We realize that there is now a new approach to dealing with the issue and to addressing the suffering of the victims. It is important for the international community to support the Haitian Government in its efforts to eliminate the disease.

Hurricane Matthew and the outbreak of cholera have had a crippling impact on the country's economy. Haiti certainly needs long-term support to address its vulnerability and economic fragility. That is why the sustained engagement of the United Nations is critical. We note the recommendation of the Secretary-General for a gradual drawdown of MINUSTAH to maintain the gains made over the past 13 years and ensure a successful transition to another follow-up peacekeeping mission, which will work to consolidate peace by strengthening the institutions of justice and the rule of law, as well as by supporting the institutional and operational capacity of the Haitian National Police. Therefore, we support the renewal of MINUSTAH's mandate for a final six months to allow a smooth transition.

We also recognize regional and subregional organizations, in particular the Organization of American States, the Union of South American Nations and the Caribbean Community, for their important role in the process of stabilization and reconstruction in Haiti.

Finally, we in Africa have a special attachment with people of African descent in the diaspora and we stand in solidarity and support with the people and Government of Haiti, as they continue striving to consolidate the progress made recently and address the multiple challenges facing their nation.

**Mr. Lamek** (France) (*spoke in French*): I too would like to begin by extending sympathy on behalf of my country, France, to Egypt and Sweden, which have both suffered reprehensible terrorist attacks in recent days, and reiterate my Government's full support.

I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Honoré, for her briefing.

I align myself with the statements that will be delivered by the observer of the European Union and by the representative of Peru, on behalf of the Group of Friends of Haiti.

I would like to address two points in my statement. First, I should like to express our satisfaction about the recently concluded election process in Haiti, which heralds the restoration of constitutional order and provides new opportunities for meeting the challenges that the country faces. I would also like to convey our support for the Secretary-General's recommendations with regard to the dynamic nature of the United Nations presence in Haiti, which gives us the opportunity to evaluate the achievements of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and move towards the establishment of another peacekeeping mission that is more lightweight and better suited to the country's needs.

France welcomes the recent conclusion of the electoral cycle that began several years ago in Haiti, and the subsequent restoration of constitutional order on 7 February. We believe that that was a major development in the process of stabilizing the country. Such developments are particularly noteworthy because the elections took place in a generally peaceful environment. Their success can be attributed primarily to the Haitian Government and, in particular, to the Provisional Electoral Council and the Haitian National Police, which all played a key role in organizing the elections and in providing security. We would like to take the opportunity to welcome the spirit of accountability demonstrated by former provisional President Jocelerme Privert, who kept his promise to do all in his power to conclude the electoral cycle as soon as possible. Once again, France warmly congratulates Mr. Jovenel Moïse on his election as President of Haiti, following a transparent, inclusive and credible election process, as well as on the swift inauguration by Parliament of Jack Guy Lafontant as Prime Minister.

Haiti has turned over a new leaf following several months of uncertainty caused by successive election delays, and once again now has strong institutions that are fully vested with democratic legitimacy, which can effectively meet the daily challenges that its people face. The Haitian population and the international community have every reason to welcome that outcome. Haiti and its leaders can count on France's ongoing support during this new phase, which will allow for deepening relations and enhanced cooperation between our countries.

France welcomes the recommendations contained in the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/223), which addresses the outcome of the strategic assessment review conducted in Haiti early this year. More than 13 years after the establishment of MINUSTAH, we fully support the idea that it is now time to evaluate the Mission's achievements in stabilizing Haiti and move towards developing a new approach to the United Nations presence in Haiti that is more suited to the country's needs and conditions on the ground, which have changed dramatically. The work of MINUSTAH, which continues to be supported by the Security Council, as well as by the troop-contributing countries — whose efforts we commend here today — has enabled Haiti to emerge from the emergency situation it faced until recently by restoring a relatively safe environment, taking part in the rebuilding efforts after the 2010 earthquake and providing considerable support to the Haitian National Police, whose growing authority is an indicator of stability in Haiti. I would also like to point out that it is important for the Haitian National Police to remain a professional, apolitical and independent institution, as underscored by the Special Representative, and the backbone of Haiti's security chain.

In spite of the gains made, France remains convinced that the United Nations has not yet completed its work in Haiti. That is why we support the establishment, on the day after MINUSTAH's termination, of a new peacekeeping operation that is more lightweight and focused on strengthening Haiti's institutions in a few key areas, with a mandate and specific exit timeline, in keeping with the good practices we encourage in the area of peacekeeping. The new operation will have to consolidate the progress achieved in the past few years, particularly by ensuring that the Haitian National Police can function independently, but also by working on some major new projects in the area of the rule of law, such as combating impunity, strengthening the judiciary's professionalism and independence and establishing a prison system that is compatible with the country's needs and respects the rights of prisoners. The human rights situation, various aspects of which continue to be a cause for concern, will also have to be carefully monitored and accompanied by regular recommendations. We expect to see the Haitian authorities cooperating fully in that regard, and we are willing to continue our bilateral dialogue on that subject.

Lastly, the new operation will have to work closely on the ground with the United Nations country team, which from now on will be the actor in the forefront in dealing with the country's other challenges, especially where the Secretary-General's new approach to combating cholera is concerned. France is supporting its first phase in particular, including through a voluntary contribution of €600,000. We encourage all of Haiti's partners and friends to translate their words into deeds and to contribute to that collective effort to benefit the Haitian people.

For a long time now France has been urging the Council to shoulder its responsibilities towards Haiti by taking the decisions needed to ensure that the United Nations engagement on the ground can continue to be as appropriate and effective as possible. The Secretary-General's recommendations for closing MINUSTAH as soon as possible, and establishing a successor mission focused on issues related to the police, the rule of law and human rights, give us the opportunity to do that. They combine the execution of a responsible transition designed to maintain the results achieved in the past few years with a demonstration of the Council's ability to make sure that the United Nations modalities of action on the ground continue to evolve and that their chief goal is finding the best response to the needs of the populations involved. France fully supports that approach.

**Mr. Llorentty Solíz** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first like to join my colleagues in expressing my condolences to the people and the Government of Egypt and firmly condemning the recent terrorist attacks there, as well as to our brothers and sisters in Somalia in the wake of the attacks there a few days ago.

I would like to thank the presidency for convening today's debate on the situation in the Republic of Haiti. We welcome Ms. Sandra Honoré, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). We acknowledge the tireless work that she and all the men and women of the Mission — civilian, military and police — are doing for the Haitian people through their efforts to help the country safeguard its people's security and achieve long-term stability.

Bolivia welcomes the new governmental structure and elected officials, the result of the excellent conduct of the electoral process and a clear sign of the progress being made towards achieving lasting political stability and consolidating democracy in Haiti. We would like to reaffirm our commitment to our brother country's present and future. We are part of the cooperative efforts of the region and the international community to help Haiti overcome the socioeconomic problems that have afflicted it for decades. We encourage all the efforts being made to consolidate the country's stability and promote its development through stable mechanisms designed to assist and cooperate with the Haitian authorities.

In that regard, we would like to stress the importance of the new United Nations justice and support mission that will succeed MINUSTAH and that should continue the work of supporting and consolidating the national security forces. In our view, therefore, it will be important for the Security Council to continue to evaluate the situation on the ground in Haiti, which is why we should work with our Haitian brothers and sisters to plan a visit by the Council so that it can get first-hand information on the situation.

We urge the international community to continue and strengthen its solidarity with Haiti. It is everyone's responsibility to combat the poverty and injustice that are products of a series of circumstances that have affected the country not just in terms of political instability and natural disasters but in some cases even through the presence of the United Nations itself.

We commend the progress that both the State and MINUSTAH have made in the past 14 years and the extraordinary capacity for resilience shown by the people of Haiti. The continued improvement and professionalization of the Haitian National Police, which will improve the State's presence and authority, are also especially important. It is crucial to ensure that resources continue to be allocated to quick-impact projects aimed at promoting citizens' security and an effective legal framework that will protect them and enable them to fully exercise their rights.

However, despite this progress, we are concerned about the endemic cholera situation, which has infected approximately 788,000 people since its outbreak in 2010 and has killed around 9,000. This highlights the vital need to strengthen Haiti's national health institutions and water and sanitation systems and their ability to respond to the problem. While we have taken note of the United Nations efforts to mitigate the cholera problem by acknowledging its responsibility for the original outbreak in 2010, in our view such recognition is not enough. The international community must consider ways of making reparation for the damage as soon as possible. In that regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's initiative to launch an emergency response to the cholera epidemic and the new United Nations approach in campaigning against its spread.

We would like to emphasize that negotiations on a new mandate for a mission in Haiti should be consistently conducted in consultation and coordination with the country's Government and new authorities, and should always take their priorities into account, with Haiti seen as the sole and principal author of its own destiny, without any interference.

Finally, I would like to reiterate what was said at a recent meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of La Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América, which is that we believe we owe a historic debt of gratitude to the Haitian nation, and that we are committed to continuing to promote cooperation with it, in accordance with its Government's priorities and in full respect for its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

**Mr. Wilson** (United Kingdom): I would like to thank Special Representative Honoré for her briefing this morning, and to join others in expressing my condolences to Egypt for the terrible attacks that took place there on Palm Sunday. Our thoughts and prayers are with them.

At the outset, I think it is important to point to the progress that Haiti has made over the past 13 years. In these meetings we often discuss the most pressing and recent developments, and that can occasionally mean that we lose sight of the overall trajectory of countries on our agenda. For Haiti, that trajectory is upwards. We have seen the professionalization and reform of the Haitian National Police, and we have seen the improvement in the security section. We have witnessed credible and fair elections, as the Special Representative just outlined, which have led to a peaceful transfer of power and a return to constitutional order. We were all shocked when Haiti was struck by natural disasters, but we have also seen the resilience of the Haitian people and the process of rebuilding.

Clearly this is not a story of uninterrupted progress. There is much more to be done, especially where protecting human rights, empowering women, widening access to justice and, of course, achieving long-term development are concerned. Along with many others in this Chamber today, the United Kingdom is gravely concerned about the continued presence of cholera in the country. We have contributed more than $600,000 to the United Nations Haiti Cholera Response Multi-Partner Trust Fund. I urge others to step up and make what contributions that they can so that together we can rid Haiti of that horrific disease once and for all.

Despite those challenges, Haiti in 2017 is a different country than that of 2004, the year in which the mandate of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) began. As President Moïse said in his inauguration speech in February, it is time for MINUSTAH to go. A great deal has been achieved by the Mission during those 13 years. On behalf of the United Kingdom, I want to offer our thanks to everyone involved in MINUSTAH and the United Nations country team for their hard work in securing that outcome.

I would like to particularly express my thanks to Sandra Honoré for her services as Special Representative for almost four years.

We want to see a phased withdrawal over the next six months and a successor Mission continue some of MINUSTAH's work. To be effective, that mission must have access to the most appropriate personnel and equipment. It should be underpinned by high-quality training and skilled leadership alongside clear accountability for underperformance and misconduct. The successor to MINUSTAH, like all peace operations mandated by the Council, must have a clear exit strategy. That exit strategy should be established at the beginning of the mission, not at its end, and include clear benchmarks covering a two year-year period.

Joint analysis and planning with the United Nations country team are critical, as is the gradual but steady handover of responsibilities to Haiti's Government and national institutions. A two-year exit strategy should safeguard Haiti from the risk of a sudden and hastily planned withdrawal or, quite differently, the quagmire of a mission that never ends. That does not signify the end of the United Nations commitment to Haiti, and it is not an end of the United Kingdom's commitment, either.

Even with the leadership and the resilience of its people, Haiti will still require development support from the international community for peace to be sustained. The decisions that we make in the Council are critical to that goal. We need to select the right United Nations tools to provide the right support, and we need to show the courage and discipline to let Haiti stand on its own.

**Mr. Sadykov** (Kazakhstan): First of all, our delegation expresses its deep condolences to the delegation of Egypt on the terrorists attacks, which took place last Sunday, and its sympathy with the people of that country. Kazakhstan stands with Egypt in combating terrorism.

I thank Special Representative Honoré for her detailed presentation of the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/223). My delegation joins other members of the Security Council in welcoming the progress achieved in strengthening stability and democracy, as well as the results of the peaceful elections, the restoration of constitutional order in Haiti and its successful conduct, despite the challenges that the country and its citizens face.

Kazakhstan is encouraged by the comprehensive and ambitious policy statement of Prime Minister Lafontant. The strong engagement of the international community is an obvious necessity for Haiti's sustainable development, while paying attention to improving housing, water, education, gender equality, prison conditions and the struggle against transnational crime. Furthermore, we welcome Prime Minister Lafontant's announcement for courageous reforms to reinvigorate public administration, combat waste and direct resources to top-priority programmes. Establishing a responsible State, in which citizens are educated and guided by a sense of collective solidarity, sends a strong message to Haitians as they follow the path of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Establishing the proposed truth and reconciliation commissions will positively generate a sense of social justice and stability.

Kazakhstan acknowledges the valuable role of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and other United Nations institutions in Haiti, especially with regard to stabilizing the security environment and to capacity-building for the Haitian National Police. We support the Secretary-General and the Group of Friends for Haiti's recommendations to establish a new, integrated stabilization mission focusing on inclusive political mechanisms, the rule of law, criminal justice and institutional and human rights related reforms.

Humanitarian assistance is critical to a country that has been devastated by numerous natural disasters and the cholera epidemic. We should design the new mandate in close dialogue with the Haitian Government and civil society. That is especially necessary as we elaborate on the future role of the United Nations presence based on the findings of the strategic assessment mission, while further considering the possibility of transferring some powers from MINUSTAH to the United Nations country team. In our view, the revised mandate should cover a wide range of issues, including human and drug trafficking, disaster management and human rights monitoring. With the continued support from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Development Programme, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, we see a positive track for Haiti with the hope and resilience that its people have demonstrated.

Special attention should also be given to implementing resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, and the subsequent relevant resolutions so as to enhance gender equality and empowerment. The support of the United Nations, especially UN-Women, UNICEF and the World Health Organization, as well as regional organizations like the Organization of American States and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), among others, will lay the foundations for future conflict prevention, peacebuilding and mediation to establish a stable Haiti. The participation of civil society will be indispensable in that process.

Kazakhstan believes that it is important to be a part of the international support for Haiti, and with others it has worked for the progress that we see today. My Government contributed humanitarian support in response to the devastating earthquake that occurred in 2010. Last year, Kazakhstan supported the initiative, entitled "Innovation pole of the greater north-the City of knowledge". It is aimed at establishing infrastructure for a knowledge-based economy in Haiti and will carry out the same functions that the biggest global research centres for technology, innovations, new ideas and development also fill.

In 2016, my country joined CARICOM as an observer and remains committed to promoting a partnership with Caribbean countries. As the only Central Asian country with observer status in the Community, Kazakhstan has supported two high-priority regional CARICOM projects. The first involves developing and implementing water-resource management through a policy and action programme, and the second concerns lending institutional support for the Ministries for Foreign Affairs of CARICOM member States, of which Haiti is one.

Finally, capacity-building is imperative to taking bold steps towards democracy and sustainable development for Haiti, and we support the Government of Haiti in its efforts to meet the challenges that it faces.

**Mr. Aboulatta** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to thank everyone for their condolences and support, which have demonstrated their solidarity with Egypt during this very stressful time. The crimes that have claimed the lives of many innocent people in Egypt and countless other places in the world show how important it is for us to work together to eliminate that phenomenon.

Allow me to thank Ms. Sandra Honoré for her briefing. We fully support the efforts that she has made with her team in Haiti. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Government and the people of Haiti for holding presidential elections at the beginning of the year and for choosing a new President who will lead the country towards political stability, conclude the transitional period and ensure the return to constitutional order. Haiti is at a historical crossroads. Despite its political progress, it continues to face tremendous challenges at every level, including an aggravated economic situation and political and security challenges.

Egypt contributes police personnel to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). The Mission plays a pivotal role in addressing those challenges, and that role needs to continue until national institutions are fully capable of shouldering their responsibilities. That will help prevent a new crisis in Haiti with political, security and humanitarian ramifications that would require another international intervention. Moreover, it is vital for the international community to work hand in hand to support Haiti and promote the capacity of its State institutions so that they can live up to their responsibilities at this critical juncture and move towards a more stable future. Therefore, as we are looking to renew the Mission's mandate, I would like to raise the following points.

First, we stress the need to ensure that the Mission's mandate is in line with political developments, progress in the field, and the need to build State institutions. We therefore support the six-month extension of the mandate, after which a new mission will be established with a specific mandate.

Secondly, we stress the need for the new mission's mandate to be limited to the establishment of State institutions, in particular a national police apparatus and rule-of-law enforcement institutions, in line with national priorities and needs and without any unconventional or successional mandate.

Thirdly, the United Nations bears a moral and even legal responsibility to support the Haitian authorities in their fight against the cholera outbreak. Therefore, the United Nations presence must ensure that there is the necessary capacity to halt this outbreak.

Fourthly, it is important we promote our efforts in the next phase to create a genuine partnership with the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding

Commission so that the support provided to Haiti includes the social, political and development dimensions needed for a more stable society and that it is responsive to the country's basic needs.

In conclusion, we must avoid making hasty decisions that pay no heed to the special needs of Haiti and the necessary capacity to build national institutions capable of shouldering their responsibilities. Allow me to take this opportunity to express our full support for Haiti, and I stress our trust in the ability of the Government and the people of the country to get through this critical period and move towards development, prosperity and inclusion in the region.

**Mr. Iliichev** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We express our condolences to our Egyptian colleagues in connection with the terrorist attack on 9 April. The masterminds of these attacks demonstrated both their lack of humanity and cruelty in carrying them out. We support the measures that are being undertaken by the Government of Egypt in its unrelenting fight against terrorism. We express our condolences to the bereaved families and hope that the injured will recover as quickly as possible.

We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Honoré, for her briefing on the results of the strategic review of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and on the situation in the country. We are pleased to note the conclusion of the long electoral process, with the conduct in November of last year of the presidential elections and then in January of this year the parliamentary elections, which clearly served to ease social and political unrest in the country.

We welcome the intention of the new Government of Haiti to strengthen national unity, peace and democratic order as well as its demonstrated readiness to engage in constructive dialogue with a wide variety of political forces to resolve problems of import for the whole country. One of the key items on the Haiti agenda is shoring up the system of governance at all levels in the interest of overcoming still highly relevant social and economic problems and ensuring long-term stability. In this regard, we consider the approval by the National Assembly of the newly-formed Government as a positive step towards establishing a viable and effective chain of executive power, which will ensure the reformation planned for by the Government of Haiti.

With respect to international support, we note the recommendation of the Secretary-General to extend the mandate of the United Nations mission for the next six-month period and its gradual drawdown of the military component, which is fully staffed at present. We see a reason to reconfigure MINUSTAH according to the new situation, but that has to be done in the most cautious manner. It is important to prevent a security void. It would be unacceptable to repeat the negative experience of the drawdown of the predecessor mission in 2000. More generally speaking, we would like to call attention to the following rather important aspect.

In spite of the fact that the relevant recommendations of the Secretary-General reflect the positive trends on the ground, we are convinced that the situation remains quite tenuous. The Haitian Government and Haitian society have a number of daunting tasks to fulfil and which need to be urgently resolved. I do not think that we could call the post-conflict stage a simple one.

As has many times been stated in this Chamber, including at the Security Council meeting with the Secretary-General on 6 April (S/PV.7918), which is the most recent example, increasing the effectiveness of how peacekeepers carry out their mandates means that the mandates have to be well defined, clear and realistic. We are guided by the idea that the Secretary-General's proposed new mission in Haiti will continue to act under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. However, the provisions of this Chapter must be applied only with respect to those tasks where it is absolutely necessary. I am referring first and foremost to security and the maintenance of law and order.

For its part, in the framework of international efforts, Russia will continue to make its contribution to undertaking a host of tasks to ensure stability and security, with a view to rebuilding the country in line with MINUSTAH's mandate.

**Mr. Lambertini** (Italy): At the outset, Madam President, as you did at the beginning of the meeting and as other colleagues have done before me, I would like convey our deepest condolences to the Egyptian delegation, the Government and the people of Egypt and the Egyptian Coptic Christian community for the meaningless terrorist attacks that happened on a very important Sunday for Christians all over the world. Sadly, I think that it has almost become a habit to start our meetings by conveying condolences, which suggests the enormity of the terror menace in the world. Again, I offer my condolences.

(*spoke in French*)

I wish to warmly thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Honoré, for her briefing and for her work over the last four years. I would also like to underscore the fact that Italy aligns itself with the statement to be made by Observer of the European Union.

We welcome the conclusion of the electoral process, the inauguration of President Jovenel Moïse, the formation of the new Government and the renewal of the National Assembly. Now that the constitutional order has been re-established, we encourage the Haitian authorities to pursue a programme of political, economic and social reform so as to strengthen the security situation in Haiti and its democratic institutions and to embark on a path of sustainable development. I would like to focus on two points.

First, this is a crucial turning point for Haiti, which the international community must be ready to support in a manner that is effective and adapted to the actual needs of the country, working in close cooperation with Haitian institutions. In this regard, we welcome the recommendations made by the Secretary-General for a responsible transition of the United Nations presence with the end goal of leaving Haiti in a position where it can independently guarantee the security, fundamental rights and the well-being of its citizens.

We support the gradual drawdown of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) in the next six months and its replacement with a peacekeeping mission with a lighter footprint, focused on the rule of law, justice and human rights, which are areas where we expect to see specific progress towards lasting stabilization and the building of an inclusive and resilient society. The compact envisaged by the Secretary General in his report (S/2017/223) is a tool to facilitate this process and to systematize and guide assistance from the United Nations and other international stakeholders.

My second point is that countries and the United Nations, in providing assistance, need today to go from an emergency-reaction posture to a structured strategy of reconstruction and development for the long term. We are mindful of the humanitarian challenges and fragility that lie down this road. Haitians have continued to suffer from the devastating consequences of Hurricane Matthew, which ravaged the country, and from cholera since 2010. The international community has mobilized so as to join with the national forces in addressing these crises. Italy, following the urgent call made by the United Nations, contributed to UNICEF programmes and the International Committee of the Red Cross. We also welcome the Secretary-General's new initiative aimed at enhanced support for measures to combat cholera and assist victims, an approach that was adopted by the General Assembly in December through resolution 71/161, which my country co-sponsored.

Shoring up security, the rule of law and democratic institutions; creating a just and effective judiciary and penal system; ensuring equality and the enjoyment of fundamental rights; and eradicating abject poverty all are key priorities for which the Haitian Government will have to take responsibility on behalf of the Haitian people. I wish here to underscore the importance of greater participation by women at all levels, political, social and economic.

By way of conclusion, let me say that the role of the international community remains vital, first of all in continuing to build the capacity of the Haitian National Police. The United Nations must deploy the tools best adapted to assist the country while refraining from drawing down too hastily. Caution must be exercised and continuity ensured so as not to undermine the achievements made over the years by MINUSTAH.

We believe that the transition planned for by the Secretary-General will be balanced. It will provide the Council with calibrated, flexible tools tailored to conditions on the ground and to the needs of Haitian institutions, in line with the parameters of efficiency, responsibility and clarity identified for mandates in the framework of the reform of peacekeeping operations undertaken by the United Nations.

Finally, I reiterate our commitment, through the Security Council and the European Union as well as at the bilateral level, to continue with joint, coordinated efforts to support the Haitian authorities as it moves towards lasting peace and inclusive democracy.

**Mr. Orrenius Skau** (Sweden): Let me begin by adding our deepest condolences to those already expressed to the families of the victims, to our friends at the Egyptian Mission and to all Egyptians. We join others in condemning this heinous attack in the strongest terms.

I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report and for the recommendations of the strategic assessment mission. I would also like to thank Special Representative Sandra Honoré for her briefing today.

Since the establishment of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), in 2004, Haiti's development and stabilization have faced many challenges: political instability, economic fragility and natural disasters. Overcoming the devastation caused by the earthquake of 2010 was particularly challenging. Yet, in spite of these obstacles, the people of Haiti have constantly displayed their strength and resilience and their determination to build a better future for themselves and their children. MINUSTAH has played an important role in supporting their efforts.

In recent months, the people of Haiti exercised their democratic right by electing a new President and Parliament. We hope that the confirmation of a new Government on 21 March will lead to a concerted effort and renewed effort to address the most pressing issues facing the country.

As Haiti continues on its journey of development, the time has come for the role and composition of MINUSTAH to evolve. In this process, we must learn from the mistakes of the past; it is important that there be adequate planning for a successor transition mission after MINUSTAH. This includes managing the handover to the United Nations country team, in the spirit of the agenda on sustaining peace.

An integrated and joined-up United Nations presence in Haiti, both during and after the transition, will be needed in order to support the people and the Government of Haiti as they address the long-standing risks and drivers of instability. This includes joint analysis and planning across the system. Continued efforts will be needed to reduce social inequalities, unleash the potential of the Haitian people by spurring economic growth so as to alleviate fiscal pressure and strengthen trust in, and the capacity of, national institutions.

We welcome the strong rule-of-law and human rights focus in the successor mission's mandate. Working under an integrated strategy across all United Nations entities in Haiti, we see a significant opportunity for the United Nations to deliver as one around these issues. The Global Focal Point for Police, Justice and Corrections Areas in the Rule of Law in Post-Conflict and Other Crisis Situations can contribute to playing an important role in coordinating the ability of the United Nations to deliver as one on the rule-of-law mandate. However, these efforts should be planned, led and mandated by Haitian counterparts. The United Nations must continue to provide dedicated support to the Haitian authorities, including to the Haitian National Police, to strengthen their capacities.

The important work undertaken by MINUSTAH on gender mainstreaming and against sexual violence must not be lost in the transition process. It will be important to maintain a strategic focus, dedicated coordination and targeted budgeting for gender issues. We welcome the recommendation that the successor mission, along with the United Nations country team, develop a coherent gender and sexual and gender-based violence strategy, as well as support the systemization of such strategy programming in the security and judicial institutions.

The recent peaceful elections, the inauguration of President Moïse and the appointment of a Prime Minister and Government are an important milestone for Haiti. As the people of Haiti increasingly take their future into their own hands, the United Nations must stand ready to support their efforts. Sweden will remain a committed partner for Haiti as it begins this new chapter.

**Mr. Kawamura** (Japan): Japan, too, offers its deep condolences to the families of the victims of the terrorist attacks in Egypt on Sunday. We join our colleagues in condemning these despicable acts and in expressing our solidarity with the people and the Government of Egypt.

I would like to thank Sandra Honoré, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for her highly informative briefing. As the conclusion of the mandate of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) approaches after 13 years, Japan reiterates its appreciation for the dedication and accomplishments of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Mission in support of a more stable, prosperous future for the Haitian people.

Japan is proud to have contributed to MINUSTAH by dispatching approximately 2,200 Self-Defense Force personnel for post-earthquake reconstruction. We pay tribute to the brave men and women from all troop- and police-contributing countries for their efforts.

Japan has followed the Haitian elections and political process with great interest, and at times with concern. We are pleased that elections have finally been held successfully, despite the impact of Hurricane Matthew, and commend Haiti's ownership of this process. This election is a milestone for Haiti's strengthened democracy and its return to constitutional order.

Now is the time for Haiti to build on this political progress to create more effective and accountable rule-of-law and justice institutions. We are pleased by the Haitian National Police's increased capacity to provide security independently from MINUSTAH. But the police is only a single component of the justice sector and the penal chain. Haiti's justice sector overall demands further reform, carefully balancing capacity development with enhanced civilian oversight.

Japan greatly appreciates the work of the recent strategic assessment mission as we consider the shape of future United Nations involvement in Haiti. We support its recommendations, including on the importance of enhanced police capacity. We must support Haiti now to ensure its self-reliance in the future. It is Haiti's progress and MINUSTAH's success that have allowed the Council to transition to a smaller, new United Nations mission. We underline the need for a clear, highly focused mandate to consolidate gains through justice support, including by strengthening the rule of law.

Haiti has made commendable progress in highly challenging conditions, but the road ahead is still long. Japan is committed to its continued support for Haiti's development, including by improving basic social services, supporting post-disaster reconstruction and fighting cholera. We look forward to working with the international community to ensure that recent improvements provide a lasting foundation for Haiti's future.

**Mr. Yelchenko** (Ukraine): I join our colleagues in expressing our solidarity with Egypt and mourning all those who were senselessly killed in recent barbaric terrorist acts. It is indeed sad that we so often have to start our statements in the Chamber by expressing condolences, but we do have to stand together in addressing this evil.

I would like to thank Ms. Sandra Honoré, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), for her briefing on the situation in the country.

Ukraine welcomes the fact that the long period of institutional instability in Haiti is finally over. We commend the Haitian authorities, in particular the Haitian Provisional Electoral Council and the Haitian National Police (HNP), on the positive steps taken to restore democratic institutions. We welcome the renewal of the National Assembly, the formation of a new Government and the adoption of a governmental programme built around priorities in security, justice, energy, education, health, agriculture and decentralization.

We congratulate the Haitian people who, while facing many political, economic and social challenges, have managed to bring the country back to constitutional order. The full restoration of Haiti's democratic institutions will help the country to move forward and to build one Haiti for all Haitians, as President Moïse stated in his inaugural speech.

We underline that the efforts of all political stakeholders should be focused on ensuring stability and security as a crucial elements of democratic consolidation. All political forces and all sectors of Haitian society should be actively engaged in this important endeavour. Broader unity is indispensable to achieving such goals as strengthening national human rights institutions and respect for human rights, combating criminality and sexual and gender-based violence, ending impunity and ensuring accountability. The return to constitutional order should enable Haiti, with the help of the international community, to address the urgent socioeconomic and humanitarian needs that have been aggravated by cholera and Hurricane Matthew.

Ukraine commends the important role MINUSTAH played in ensuring stability and security in Haiti. Its contribution to strengthening the capacity of the Haitian National Police is particularly important. We recognize that the recent Haitian elections passed with few incidents, thanks largely to MINUSTAH, the Haitian National Police and the Provisional Electoral Council. While the security situation in that Caribbean country is not perfect, solid progress has been made over the past few years.

That is why Ukraine welcomes the Secretary-General's recommendations concerning the MINUSTAH mandate. We share the opinion that the time has come to end MINUSTAH's mission and to replace it with a reduced presence that will focus on strengthening rule-of-law institutions, supporting and developing the National Police and engaging in human rights monitoring and reporting. However, we should approach this decision with the necessary responsibility and a well-thought out strategy of transition in order to avoid the repetition of past failures and missteps.

We consider it essential to continue the work of strengthening the Haitian police. The Secretary-General's recent report (S/2017/223) highlights the gains made over the years in developing the capacity of the HNP. At the same time, further consolidation of this achievement is vital. In that context, we welcome the position of the new Government on making the formation of a professional national defence force a top priority. On the other hand, we would like to underline the necessity of continued efforts of the United Nations, other multilateral agencies, international and regional partners and individual States Members of the United Nations in supporting the long-term security and development of Haiti.

**Mr. Seck** (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Madam President, you spoke eloquently in extending condolences to our colleague from Egypt on behalf of all Council members. I now do so on behalf of the Senegalese delegation, as my Government did on Palm Sunday, to condemn the heinous murder of persons who were praying in a holy place during a holy month.

I thank Ms. Sandra Honoré, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for her high-quality briefing on the situation in Haiti. I also thank her for her outstanding work at the head of the Head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

Over the past six months, the political situation in Haiti has made significant progress, including the holding of presidential, legislative and parliamentary elections in a climate of calm, transparency and freedom under the auspices of the Transitional Electoral Council. I commend the people and the authorities of Haiti, in particular the Provisional Electoral Council and the Haitian National Police, for their outstanding work accomplished in a professional and impartial manner. I also commend MINUSTAH for its good offices and work, which have made a major contribution to the stability and security of the country and to lending credibility to the electoral process.

These joint efforts have allowed Haiti to return to a fully functional constitutional order after several years of institutional stalemate. The election and swearing in on 7 February of the new President, Mr. Jovenel Moïse, who was elected in the first round with 56 per cent of the vote; the holding of legislative and parliamentary elections on 29 January; and the establishment of the Government of Prime Minister Jack Guy Lafontant with a governing programme approved by the Haitian parliament perfectly demonstrate the renewal of the constitutional order.

The international community, and particularly the United Nations, while recognizing the significant progress made, must continue to support the Haitian Government, as MINUSTAH is doing through the implementation of several projects to promote good governance and democracy, strengthen State authority and improve the living conditions of the people in a humanitarian context that remains difficult and marked by the consequences of Hurricane Matthew.

This situation has been compounded by a cholera epidemic that has raged in Haiti for several years, with devastating impacts that should be duly managed by the international community, especially now that the United Nations, through its former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, has publicly acknowledged responsibility in the spread of cholera in Haiti. Senegal supports the new approach of the Secretary-General on cholera and calls on Security Council members to collectively promote the effective implementation of this new approach, in close cooperation with the Haitian Government and the victims.

There is a need for a regular follow-up of the situation in Haiti, which remains fragile. Much remains to be done, in particular in the areas of security, justice and human rights. This pertains particularly to the draft criminal procedure code, which is an important element for benchmarking the stabilization of the country. Following the withdrawal of the Mission, we must prevent a security vacuum and the recurrence of past errors and failures that once give rise electoral crises and large-scale public unrest.

Despite the outstanding progress made by the Haitian National Police, which has become far more professional and effective, work remains to be done with respect to crime due to ongoing insecurity over the past six months, as indicated by statistics, which reveal 546 homicides in the reporting period, as compared to 510 from 1 March and 31 August 2016. I recall that during that same period, 200 cases of rape were reported, 20 kidnappings took place, 30 police officers were killed and 635 violent protests were recorded.

Regarding MINUSTAH's mandate, Senegal reiterates its confidence in Ms. Honoré and the entire MINUSTAH team. It supports the recommendations made by the strategic assessment team, which conducted its work from 6 to 11 February. concerning the configuration of a new mission to succeed MINUSTAH at the end of its mandate, 15 October.

In conclusion, Senegal belieaves that Haiti finds itself at a crossroads. That is why we urge Security Council members to continue to pay particular attention to the humanitarian, security and economic situations in Haiti, which have been put to the test in recent years. When the President assumed his new functions, the outgoing provisional President Jocelerme Privert highlighted the importance of assessing losses, damages and needs following Hurricane Matthew in October 2016. The provisional President stressed in particular that environmental, social and economic vulnerability was inexorably increasing with each passing day, with 96 per cent of the Haitian population living under the constant threat of two well-known factors: droughts and floods. Mr. Privert added that, in the framework of the draft three-year document for 2017-2019, the Government needed to mobilize upwards of $900 million in order to strengthen coastal infrastructure, secure transportation and capacities across productive sectors, all in a consistent manner, in order to reorganize national territory in the social, economic, environmental and institutional spheres.

At his inaguration, the fifty-eighth President of Haiti, Mr. Moïse, responded as that by the end of his five-year term, the changes that he promised during his electoral campaign would become a reality. Those promises included restoring the confidence of the Haitian people in the political system and class, as well as in the elite; strengthening inclusion and national sovereignty; and rebalancing the national territory. That is why Senegal appeals to the Council, through me, to assist Haiti, which is, as we see it, the first black republic to gain independence and the first South American democracy with a Parliament of more than 200 years old and a Senate that is 207 years old. I think that the international community must continue to support the country.

**Mr. Liu Jieyi** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China strongly condemns the terrorist attacks that took place in Egypt on 9 April and expresses its deepest condolences to the victims. We would also like to express our condolences to the families of the victims and the injured. China is resolutely opposed to terrorism in all its forms and firmly supports Egypt's efforts to combat terrorism.

I would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening today's debate. China listened carefully to the briefing of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Sandra Honoré.

In February, with the support and assistance of the international community, Haiti successfully held its presidential election. The new Government has now started its work smoothly. The Haitian National Police is becoming more robust, the overall situation in Haiti is stable and new opportunities are arising for national development. China hopes that all parties in Haiti will jointly maintain this positive momentum and contribute to the overall stability and development of the country.

We hope that the new Government in Haiti will identify a development path that fits its national situation; accelerate infrastructure, agriculture and other major sectors of development with a view to eradicating poverty, creating more jobs, improving livelihoods; and promote the fundamental resolution of all issues in Haiti. China expects the international community, including countries of the region, to continue to contribute to improving the situation in Haiti, help the Haitian Government in building the capacities of the Haitian National Police, and support the Government's efforts to bear responsibility for maintaining national security and stability. At the same time, we hope that the international community will provide more humanitarian assistance to help hurricane-stricken areas in Haiti to rebuild.

Recently, Secretary-General Guterres recommended that the mandate of United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) be extended for a final period of six months and that a smaller, successor peacekeeping mission be established at that time. That is recognition of the Haitian Government's ability to maintain stability and in line with developments on the ground and the expectations of all parties. China supports the recommendations of the Secretary-General and hopes that MINUSTAH will withdraw in an orderly manner, while ensuring stability in Haiti.

MINUSTAH has played an important role in maintaining security and stability in Haiti since 2004. China commends MINUSTAH's contributions and the positive efforts of Ms. Honoré as head of MINUSTAH. China hopes that the international community will actively respond to the new approach of the United Nations to cholera in order to help Haiti eradicate the epidemic as soon as possible.

**The President**: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United States.

I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Sandra Honoré, for her briefing today.

We commend Haiti for its recent peaceful transition in power. It was an important step towards stability and democracy in Haiti. Peacekeeping has made a great contribution to Haiti. Its support of the Government has been essential to ensuring a secure and stable environment. It has also provided invaluable assistance in aiding the Haitian people in recovering from a number of natural disasters, including the 2010 earthquake and Hurricane Matthew.

However, as I have said before in the Council, the real measure of progress in Haiti or any country where we have a peacekeeping mission is not dollars spent but our impact on the lives of the people we seek to help. Have we lifted them up, both as individuals and as a nation? Have we fostered independence? Have we made their lives better? It is in that spirit that we welcome the results of the strategic assessment mission, which recommend that the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti close in its current form by 15 October. The military component of the mission will withdraw, and what will follow will be a more focused, police-only mission.

MINUSTAH has never been a traditional peacekeeping effort. There is no civil conflict or peace agreement to monitor. The new mission of the United Nations for justice support in Haiti will devote its efforts to where they are most needed — in support of the rule of law, developing the Haitian police force and protecting human rights.

At our debate last Thursday (S/PV.7918) on peacekeeping operations review, we asked Council members to focus on the political foundations necessary for the success of peacekeeping missions, including whether the mandated tasks and overall concept of the mission are consistent with political realities on the ground. We regard the transformation of the Haiti Mission, including the withdrawal of the military, as a strong example of how peacekeeping missions can and should change as a country's political situation changes.

We believe that the new Haiti embodies the core principles of success we have developed as part of our peacekeeping review. Thanks to the recent elections in Haiti, the political context is right for this Mission, and the Haitian authorities are working hard to improve their capabilities. The new Mission will foster the independence and self-sufficiency of the Haitian people and will continue to support the Haitian National Police. The Mission also has defined the exit strategy established from the very beginning. That will help ensure a smooth transition of tasks and responsibilities in the future.

Looking beyond the transition of the Mission, the Government of Haiti must focus on strengthening its judicial system and human rights institutions to help ensure long-term stability. It bears the primary responsibility for coming through on this; but it can count on support from the United Nations, the international community and the United States.

As the Mission in Haiti undergoes this transition, we thank the men and women of MINUSTAH for their service, and the Haitian Government for their cooperation. We also thank the troop and police contributors to the Mission and the Group of Friends of Haiti for their work to promote stability and development. The United States is a long-standing friend and partner of Haiti. We remain committed to working with the Haitian Government to ensure the country's long-term security, democratic development and economic growth. We look forward to a new chapter of growth and independence, and the unfolding story of the Haitian people.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Haiti.

**Mr. Régis** (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, following on from the President of the Council and the colleagues who spoke before me, I should like to express once again the deep sorrow and sincere condolences of the Haitian Government and people to Egypt, Sweden and Somalia, where the deadly attacks of the past weekend caused innocent victims. I assure the Egyptian, Swedish and Somali Governments of the complete solidarity of the Haitian authorities.

I should like to begin by thanking the Security Council for inviting the Government of the Republic of Haiti to express its views and observations on the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (S/2017/223). I wish to express the Haitian Government's grateful appreciation to the Secretary-General who, in his first report on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), shows a spirit of solidarity and commitment to the Haitian people for which we are deeply thankful. His objective, well-researched and balanced report, as well as his judicious recommendations, testify to his well-known breadth of vision and generosity of spirit.

The progress made in recent years towards the establishment of the rule of law in Haiti, although limited in some respects, remains undeniable. That progress is clearly highlighted in the report. Institutional weaknesses are also highlighted, as is the slow pace of some key reforms. There are still many obstacles on the path to the rule of law and the development of human rights in Haiti. The report also stresses the serious socioeconomic challenges, the effects of declining official development assistance flows, the urgent need for food security, and the deteriorating health situation, illustrated by the resurgence of the cholera epidemic. However, there are glimmers of hope on the horizon.

The accession to the presidency of His Excellency Mr. Jovenel Moïse, on 7 February, at the conclusion of an arduous and complex but highly successful electoral process, was unanimously hailed as a decisive turning point in political life in Haiti. As the Secretary-General points out in his report, with the peaceful conclusion of the electoral process and the return to constitutional order, an important step has just been taken. A general election with unchallenged results was held. The peaceful transfer of power, the restoration of Parliament to full functioning, the legitimacy of elected representatives, and the appointment of an open Government bringing together some of the main political groups represented in the legislature, are elements that form the bedrock of the stability that the new Government, led by Prime Minister Jack Guy Lafontant, is working to consolidate.

The impartiality and professionalism demonstrated by the Haitian institutions in these elections are rightly emphasized in the report. In that regard, MINUSTAH's role in strengthening the capacities of the Haitian National Police, which was undoubtedly a key element in the establishment of a climate of security and stability, should be commended. That is undoubtedly one of the outstanding achievements to be credited to the Mission. Now that the objective of creating a safe and stable environment — one of the major thrusts of the mandate entrusted to MINUSTAH by resolution 1542 (2004) — has been achieved, we can overcome the structural disadvantages and address the serious problems that have so long compromised the political, social and economic stability of Haiti, and that have impeded foreign direct investment in the country. The report of the Secretary-General provides an overview of the challenges ahead.

In that regard, the President of the Republic, together with the Government and Parliament, has just launched a programme of institutional reforms to tackle the most pressing sociopolitical and economic challenges, in particular that of bringing Haiti through a situation of economic fragility to one of sustained growth. It is in that spirit of dialogue and consultation that the Prime Minister has presented to Parliament an ambitious programme of action aimed at implementing a number of reforms that are considered essential from the economic and social points of view, as well as in the areas of security, justice and human rights — in short, in terms of consolidating the rule of law, in parallel with the sustained revival of growth and development. In that regard, we welcome the desire of the United Nations to actively support the priorities of the Government and the main thrusts of its plan of action by, inter alia, assisting in the organization of the Etats généraux sectoriels de la Nation.

With regard to the mandate of MINUSTAH, there is a perfect convergence between the views of the United Nations and the Government of Haiti on the gradual and orderly withdrawal of MINUSTAH after 13 years of work in Haiti. The Haitian Government considers the consolidation of security and stability achievements to be essential. The phased withdrawal of the military and civilian components of MINUSTAH should enable the Haitian institutions concerned to effectively assume the functions of the Mission. Consequently, both parties must agree on a withdrawal timetable that cannot give rise to any kind of security vacuum. The proposed transition period thus responds to the common concern to ensure that the Haitian National

Police has adequate capacity to assume over time full responsibility for the country's security and to address all threats of instability within the country, irrespective of an international uniformed presence.

For that reason, the Government of Haiti supports the Secretary-General's recommendation on the extension of the MINUSTAH mandate for a final period of six months, extending the original deadline to 15 October 2017. it also supports the recommendation to the Security Council to establish, under a new name, a new presence whose functions would be focused mainly on strengthening the rule of law and the police. In that context, the Government of Haiti endorses the modalities of the transition, including, first, the complete but staggered withdrawal of the 2,370 members of the military component during the transition period; secondly, the reduction in the number of police units formed and of individual police officers; thirdly, the participation of the new mission in the implementation of the strategic development plan of the Haitian National Police; and fourthly, the integration of the activities of the new mission into the United Nations country team, taking into account Haiti's residual stabilization needs, as well as its good offices role in support of political stability and good governance.

The guiding principle to orient the future role and presence of the United Nations in Haiti is to ensure a responsible transition that builds on the achievements of the past 13 years, while meeting the country's priority needs for stabilization and capacity-building. The Government of Haiti adheres to that vision. It will continue to work closely with the United Nations to ensure the full success of the new phase in their cooperation. It also hopes that the United Nations appeal for a new impetus of solidarity with Haiti will be widely heard by the international community.

It is in this context that the President of the Republic and the Government of Haiti place the greatest interest in the reactivation of the humanitarian and reconstruction mechanisms in the regions that were tragically hit by Hurricane Matthew in October. Whole populations are still living in scarcity and distress, the stricken victims of Haiti's exposure to climate change. I reiterate the Haitian authorities' call to keep Haiti's Sud and Grande-Anse provinces on the agendas of humanitarian agencies, non-governmental organizations and the country's cooperation partners through the structures of the Haitian State.

As it did on 1 December 2016 at the informal information meeting with the Secretary-General on the new United Nations strategy against cholera in Haiti, the Haitian delegation reiterates the value attached by the Government of Haiti to the two-pronged approach advocated by the Secretary-General to the eradication of cholera in Haiti. The Government strongly and urgently calls for the funds necessary for the implementation of parts I and II of the plan of action — some $400 million over two years — to be raised within the required time frame.

The Government of Haiti takes this opportunity to thank all friendly countries, members of the Security Council, troop-contributing countries and all of Haiti's cooperation partners for their ongoing commitment, in one way or another, to MINUSTAH. May the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms Sandra Honoré, be thanked and congratulated for the hard work she has done for nearly four years.

At this crossroads, where a safe and stable climate allows the Haitian people to see a glimmer of hope, the Government fervently looks forward to the continued support of all its partners in the context of the new United Nations presence in Haiti. It calls on the international community to lend its full support to the difficult task of rebuilding the country's essential infrastructure, sustained growth, social progress and sustainable development.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

**Mr. Sobral Duarte** (Brazil): At the outset, allow me to express our condolences to the Government and the people of Egypt for the tragic terrorist attack perpetrated on Sunday, which took so many innocent lives.

I thank the United States for convening this debate. I congratulate the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Sandra Honoré, on her briefing and reiterate my Government's appreciation for her leadership. I also appreciate the contribution of the Permanent Representative of Haiti, Ambassador Denis Régis.

I would like to start by commending Haitian political actors and the efforts of the leadership of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) to support the political process, which allowed the completion of the electoral process and the return to constitutional order last February.

Brazil supports the Secretary-General's positive assessment regarding stability and security in Haiti. In this context, we agree to the gradual withdrawal of the military component, as proposed by the Secretary-General, attuned to realities on the ground.

As the United Nations reduces its military footprint, development assistance should be scaled up. Very often, however, as troops depart development and humanitarian actors and resources follow suit. A future presence of the United Nations in Haiti should be able to reverse that trend. It should be based on the broad repertoire on the relation between security and development, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, sustaining peace and sound transitions.

Aware of MINUSTAH's accomplishments, we must bear in mind that the United Nations work in Haiti is not over. There are still many challenges ahead. In this regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation that a new United Nations peacekeeping mission be established in Haiti following the possible termination of MINUSTAH by 15 October, in order to continue to assist the Government of Haiti in consolidating its gains by reinforcing Government institutions and strengthening the national capacity in the rule of law, police development and human rights.

MINUSTAH's experience has shown the potential of innovative approaches that should continue to be carried out by the new mission. Tools such as the reduction of community violence and quick-impact projects have played an important role in supporting core stabilization objectives and will certainly be crucial for the consolidation of the rule of law in Haiti. We also reiterate our support to the United Nations for its new approach to cholera in Haiti and the full implementation of that approach in order to tackle the significant increase in the number of suspected cases of cholera. It is alarming that 440 Haitians are still dying per year from the disease.

Brazilian society has been very supportive of Brazil's engagement with MINUSTAH since its inception. Moreover, the past 13 years have provided a unique and unprecedented experience for Brazil, as it led the command of MINUSTAH's troops and the deployment of more than 30,000 soldiers, working side-by-side with peacekeepers from our region and all around the globe, to support the Haitian authorities in their efforts to ensure a secure and stable environment for their people, and also to help them to reconstruct the country after natural disasters.

During that period, we identified several best practices and lessons learned related to the implementation of MINUSTAH's mandate that could be further discussed and incorporated in other peacekeeping missions, such as the Group of Friends of Haiti, enhanced civilian-military coordination in the field, community-approach strategies as confidence-building measures, the innovative use of engineering units and the important role of women in all areas of the stabilization process.

Let me conclude by reaffirming Brazil's long-term commitment and solidarity with Haiti and our confidence in the Haitian people's determination to persist and succeed in their quest for stability, democracy and prosperity.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Spain.

**Mr. González de Linares Palou** (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): My country, which has unfortunately also fallen victim to terrorism, would like to reiterate to the international community and, in particular, to the countries that have suffered its cruel effects last week, our solidarity and firm readiness to continue collaborating in efforts to combat this scourge. The victims suffer, whatever the reason for which they were attacked, and that should push us all — above and beyond extending our condolences — to demonstrate our unity and stoicism as we face the barbarism of terrorism.

With regard to today's topic, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2017/223) on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Haiti, Ms. Sandra Honoré, for her briefing. I take this opportunity to thank her for her valuable and effective efforts in Haiti as head of MINUSTAH over the years.

We warmly congratulate the Haitian people for concluding the electoral cycle that began in 2015 and for the restoration of constitutional order. Spain reiterates its readiness to collaborate with the new Government in order to overcome the country's challenges. We welcome the deployment of MINUSTAH's strategic assessment mission, but we regret that the new Government has been left with very little leeway to weigh in on the situation.

Ongoing consultations with the Government are a good practice that should be maintained, in particular when preparing for the departure of a peacekeeping operation that has been deployed in the country for 13 years.

We thank MINUSTAH for its efforts and support the Secretary-General's recommendation for it to exit the country responsibly and be replaced with a new peacekeeping operation, focused on promoting the rule of law, on the ongoing training of the Haitian National Police and on assessing the human rights situation.

We would like to have details about the Mission's departure as soon as possible, so that that withdrawal can take place in the very short time frame of a mere six months, with the simultaneous drawdown of formed police units. I do not recall the Security Council ever stipulating such a short time frame for the departure of a mission. In any event, the mission's departure will pose major challenges, as this is a very delicate time in the country and the process should be conducted as smoothly as possible.

With regard to the mission that will replace MINUSTAH, we encourage the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to keep the communication channels open with the new Government in preparation for it. We believe that the mandate to support the Haitian National Police and promote the rule of law, which the Secretary-General recommends, should be entrusted to the new mission. It can be achieved and sustained only with the leadership, ownership and participation of the Haitian Government. In addition, preserving the new mission's role as a deterrent will, no doubt, pose a challenge, and we will have to procure aviation capacity on the civilian market for the deployment of additional personnel where necessary.

In conclusion, I would like to recall that in spite of the gains made, Haiti still requires international assistance in this new phase, and Haitians know that they will have Spain's full commitment.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

**Ms. Mejía Vélez** (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for today's debate on the situation in Haiti.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement that will be made by the Ambassador of Peru on behalf of the Group of Friends of Haiti.

I thank, in particular, Special Representative Honoré for her briefing on the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/223) and for her tireless commitment to Haiti over the past four years. Everyone here has stated that it is encouraging that tangible progress has been made in a situation that, just a few months ago, seemed dire on many fronts.

I would also like to acknowledge the Government and the people of Haiti for demonstrating their ability and resilience to hold free elections, which illustrates their respect for democratic values. The election of President Moïse and the formation of his Government are significant and tangible steps towards the consolidation of democracy in Haiti. We also welcome the election of 30 per cent of women to municipal councils. We hope that the United Nations will continue to provide them with the support needed to allow them to carry out their work efficiently.

I have repeatedly stated here in the Security Council that we must protect, at all costs, the achievements of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). Now that we have renewed its mandate for the final time and are moving towards the establishment of a new mission, it is essential to preserve the progress that has been made in order to overcome some of the challenges and hurdles that still prevent the Haitian people from reaching their full potential. The future presence of the United Nations in Haiti must have as its goal to ensure a responsible transition that would prevent the emergence of security or institutional gaps. The central responsibility for the transition lies with the Government and its leaders.

The progress made by the Haitian National Police force, which the Special Representative outlined, in particular with regard to its performance and the duties that it must undertake in this new phase so as to ensure democratic continuity, will continue to be supported by my country through both the presence of our officers and police in the country and the training of female Haitian police officers in Colombia. Female police officers, to date, barely account for 9 per cent of the force, but we will continue to train them. We hope that the force's 2017-2021 strategic plan will also include a major component on gender and the prevention of and response to acts of sexual violence.

As Special Representative Honoré pointed out, it is urgent that progress be made on reforming the justice system so as to cut down on illegal and prolonged detentions without trial, ease congestion in prisons and improve respect for the rule of law and human rights, an ongoing task that still needs work. The Haitian State has shown itself able to comply in that regard through its acceptance of 175 of the 213 recommendations set out in its submission to the Human Rights Council's universal periodic review.

Our brotherly people and the Government of Haiti face many challenges, but there are tools available that can help to build a peaceful, stable country with sustainable development. That will require very close coordination between the country team and MINUSTAH and, later, with the special political mission, but the Government of Haiti can count on our support in that effort.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

**Mr. García Moritán** (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by expressing our condolences to the peoples and the Governments of Egypt and Somalia for the dastardly attacks perpetrated recently in their countries. We thank the United States for organizing today's debate and Ms. Sandra Honoré for her comprehensive briefing on the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2017/223) on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), including its recommendations on the new peacekeeping operation that will, we hope, succeed MINUSTAH as of 15 October.

My country associates itself with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Peru on behalf of the Group of Friends of Haiti. I would also like to make some additional comments in my national capacity.

Argentina has participated in every United Nations effort to help Haiti to attain stability and work out its own path to development since 1994. In that regard, we can only be pleased with the forthcoming successful conclusion of MINUSTAH's mission and the transition to a new phase, which will, we hope, see peace consolidated in Haiti for good. We commend the Haitian people for the peaceful conduct of their electoral process and the restoration of constitutional order, and congratulate their new President, Mr. Jovenel Moïse, on his election in February and wish him every success in his new job.

We also welcome the new Government under Prime Minister Jack Guy Lafontant and encourage his efforts to tackle his country's continuing tough challenges. In that regard, we are pleased that both the Secretary-General's report and the resolution drafted by the Group of Friends of Haiti expect that the mandate of the new mission to be established in October will focus on helping the Haitian State to strengthen its rule-of-law institutions, develop the Haitian National Police and protect human rights. Those are functions whose inclusion in peacekeeping-mission mandates my country has always argued for. We trust that the mission will also contribute to the country's economic and social development by continuing to conduct programmes for reducing community violence, quick-impact projects and other activities that can help to achieve genuine and lasting peace, including through political efforts supporting implementation of the Organization's new approach to cholera.

After 13 years in Haiti and following the departure in April 2015 of our battalion and air unit, our military hospital will leave in October. After that, we are planning to continue the participation of the 15 Argentine civilian police officers who are there currently, with the possibility of adding some more if that is possible and needed under the new mission's mandate. With regard to the coming transition and as we expressed at the Council's meeting with the Mission's troop- and police-contributing countries (see S/PV.7914), we would perhaps have preferred a more gradual drawdown of MINUSTAH's police component, whereby the police and civilian components would begin to be reduced once the military withdrew or after a certain amount of time has passed, so as not to suddenly weaken the Organization's presence at a time when both the police and civilian activities are becoming more essential to the consolidation of peace and the achievement of sustainable peace. Nonetheless, we would like to reiterate our confidence in the judgement of the Secretariat and the will of the Haitian Government and the people, and we hope that both the transition and the launch of the new mission will go smoothly and with adequate human and material resources, and will signal the start of an era of peace and development in Haiti.

I would like especially to thank Ms. Honoré on the successful conclusion of her work.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

**Ms. Adamson** (European Union): I would first like to express our condolences to our Egyptian, Swedish and Somalian colleagues for the recent attacks in their countries.

(*spoke in French*)

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States. The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

I thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2017/223) and the Special Representative for her briefing. I also thank the Permanent Representative of Haiti for his statement.

The European Union is pleased that the long period of institutional instability in the electoral process in Haiti is finally over. The completion of the electoral process resulted in the transparent and credible election of a President by an ample majority and a renewed National Assembly. A new Government has been formed, and its programme has the support of the new National Assembly. We congratulate the Haitian people and their political stakeholders. Despite enormous difficulties and the weaknesses in their system, they have succeeding in restoring constitutional order to the country based on the will of the voters, something that Haiti desperately needs if it is to tackle its many political, economic, social and environmental challenges.

As has been the case for the past few years, the efforts of all to ensure stability and security will continue to be crucial to the process of democratic consolidation. Thorough reform of the electoral system, agreed on by consensus, will be key to avoiding new crises and regaining the people's trust. In that context and while we regret the fact that the mandate of the United Nations Independent Expert on human rights has not been renewed, we emphasize how important it is to ensure that the Government's new structures and mechanisms for protecting human rights take up and further develop the Expert's work so far. The European Union will continue to be a faithful partner to the Republic of Haiti and is committed to supporting it in this sensitive phase, in consultation with its other partners.

The European Union is one of Haiti's major donors in emergencies and for development, as its response following the recent devastating effects of Hurricane Matthew testified. The member States of the European Union and the European Commission have launched a series of short-, medium- and long-term actions ranging from immediate assistance to assistance for reconstruction and prevention amounting to tens of millions of euros.

We take note of the Secretary-General's proposal to close the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and replace it with a reduced presence focused on consolidating the rule of law and the police service, with the principal aim of supporting political stability and good governance, including election monitoring and reform. MINUSTAH plays a key role in providing political stability and security in Haiti, including by ensuring security during particularly difficult times, such as the recent holding of elections. We must, therefore, consider making decisions with commensurate caution and responsibility in the framework of a permanent dialogue with the Haitian authorities.

Furthermore, the European Union believes that the security situation in Haiti needs to be closely followed, as was recently illustrated by the attack against former President Aristide, which could have had serious consequences for public order and the stability of the country. We therefore believe that it is essential to continue the work of strengthening the Haitian police.

When the time comes, during the transition period, it will be essential to ensure a well-prepared continuity. The security and welfare of citizens, as well as the stability of the country, are at stake. In that regard, we welcome the emphasis placed on issues relating to the rule of law and human rights in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/223), and we encourage further clarification on the steps to be taken and future responsibilities.

In conclusion, I would like once again to express the appreciation of the European Union for the fundamental contribution made by MINUSTAH in terms of security, democracy-building and the rule of law in Haiti. It is now necessary that the sequence of events that will ultimately make the Haitian State fully responsible for the security and protection of its citizens be precisely defined, planned and fully implemented in close consultation with the new Haitian authorities.

With the United Nations and the international community, the European Union will support the Haitian authorities, so that they can strengthen their commitment and efforts to ensure a better future in peace, democracy and the well-being of all the Haitian people.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Guatemala.

**Mr. Castañeda Solares** (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, allow me to express our most sincere and heartfelt condolences to the delegation of Egypt and the delegation of Sweden on the condemnable attacks that their countries have recently suffered.

My delegation thanks you, Madam President, for organizing this meeting, and, at the same time, we would like to take this opportunity to thank the Special Representative of Secretary-General, Ms. Sandra Honoré, for her presence.

We align ourselves with the statement to be made by the delegation of Peru on behalf of the Group of Friends of Haiti.

Guatemala commends the efforts made by the brotherly country of Haiti, which have contributed to its stabilization and the strengthening of its democracy, in particular the peaceful conclusion of the electoral process on 7 February. We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate President Jovenel Moïse on his election.

Guatemala welcomes the leadership and commitment shown by the national authorities in financing, organizing and providing security for the holding of credible and inclusive of elections despite the adverse humanitarian conditions resulting from the impact of Hurricane Matthew. The success of the elections and the transfer of power is an example of the political maturity of the Haitian authorities.

We recognize Haiti's efforts to strengthen its justice and human rights sector. We encourage the authorities to continue working towards ensuring that their institutions, particularly the Supreme Court, are fully functional, which is needed for strengthening the rule of law and the standing of the institutions of the country.

We believe that, when the Security Council considers the Haitian national context, it must do so in a comprehensive manner, in particular by taking into account the humanitarian situation, which was severely aggravated following the impact of Hurricane Matthew on 4 October, the consequences of which are still affecting the population, owing to the limited access to drinking water and the presence of presumed cases of cholera. In that context, we commend the coordinated efforts led by the Government of Haiti, with the support of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), the country team and humanitarian partners, to address the various needs arising from the effects of Hurricane Matthew.

Furthermore, we believe that it is worth underlining that the role and presence of the United Nations in Haiti must have as their main goal to ensure a responsible transition based on MINUSTAH's achievements of the past several years and to ensure the continued support of the country's priority needs. To that end, it will be essential to ensure that the withdrawal of the uniformed members of the peacekeeping mission does not foster the perception of a security vacuum and that the successor mission is focused on the rule of law, human rights and the strengthening of the police. We firmly believe that any transition must be carried out in a responsible, gradual and realistic manner in accordance with the country's priorities and needs so as to achieve sustainable peace in Haiti.

In conclusion, Guatemala supports the Secretary-General's recommendations and appreciates the leadership of Ms. Sandra Honoré and the work of MINUSTAH's civilian and uniformed personnel. The degree of commitment shown over the past 12 years to fulfil the mission's mandate has reflected a coordinated effort on the part of the international community that has borne fruit. Guatemala has participated in those stabilization efforts in Haiti and has contributed to MINUSTAH since 2004. Our commitment to the brotherly country of Haiti has been firm and consistent, and it is our heartfelt wish to see Haiti achieve stability and development for which we reiterate our support in the Council.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

**Mr. Blanchard** (Canada): Allow me to join Canada's voice to others in expressing our condolences to Egypt and Sweden.

Let me begin by highlighting the immense task that has been accomplished by the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) since 2004 with regard to stability and security in Haiti. In that regard, I would like to pay tribute to that mission's staff for their commitment and dedication demonstrated over the past 13 years, including during the terrible events of January 2010 and October 2016.

I would also like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her presentation today and her tireless efforts towards Haiti's development.

(*spoke in French*)

My country is particularly pleased with the restoration of constitutional order in Haiti. The recent conclusion of the electoral cycle must now pave the way for a lasting socioeconomic recovery that will benefit all and facilitate the transition to a successor United Nations mission with a new name in accordance with the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2017/223).

More compact and focused, that new peace operation will play a key role, notably through the continued strengthening of the capacities of the Haitian National Police and the necessary consolidation of the rule of law. It is necessary that democracy, as well as peace and security, take root as the foundation and the necessary ingredients for greater prosperity for the entire Haitian population, with particular attention accorded to women, children and the most vulnerable.

Thanks to the efforts that have been made by the Haitian people, we now can see the light at the end of the tunnel and the next major stage — the economic development of Haiti. But there will be no economic development without growth supported by private investment in Haiti. It is therefore urgent to consolidate the rule of law and maintain peace and security so as to develop an environment conducive to investment and development. Only that kind of economic development can ensure true improvement in the quality of life of the Haitian people.

Although the progress made to date is undeniable, the situation nevertheless remains fragile and incomplete. As such, the progress achieved must be preserved and consolidated through an effective and responsible transition by duly taking into account the situation on the ground, in particular the capacity of the Haitian police to assume its entire mandate on its own. The coming months will be decisive with regard to the preparation and consequently to the success of that transition.

As we turn a new page so that Haiti and the international community can embark upon a decisive turning point for the country's future, Canada will stand by the Haitian people in the name of our common values and the strong bonds of friendship and solidarity that unite us.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Chile.

**Mr. Barros Melet** (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to reiterate to the Government and the people of Egypt the solidarity and sorrow of my Government for the criminal attack they suffered last weekend.

We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Sandra Honoré, for her briefing and welcome the presence here today of the Permanent Representative of Haiti, Ambassador Denis Régis.

Chile associates itself with the statement to be made by the representative of Peru on behalf of the Group of Friends of Haiti.

Today's debate is historic, since, as agreed by the Security Council, we will be begin the process of drawing down the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and establishing a successor peace operation. That concludes a cycle initiated in 2004, when the international community came to the aid of our Haitian brothers and sisters by setting up a multidimensional mission with a broad mandate, in which, for Chile and other countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, the link between security and development as a way of achieving sustainable peace was fundamental. Rapid-impact projects and programmes to reduce community violence carried out by the MINUSTAH contingent are the most concrete manifestation of that.

There are areas where achievements have been considerable, such as stabilization and security, and others where tasks are still pending, such as the strengthening of the rule of law, access to justice and human rights. Similarly, MINUSTAH played a key role in addressing the humanitarian challenges posed by the catastrophic 2010 earthquake and the subsequent reconstruction, as well as the devastating consequences of Hurricane Matthew and other natural disasters that have regularly struck Haiti in the past.

The recent conclusion of the electoral process, the restoration of constitutional order, the formation of the new Government, the legislative power's return to functionality, the election of local authorities and other milestones provide an opportunity that we cannot pass up in our efforts to strengthen the principle of national ownership and produce needed synergies with the international community.

The United Nations will continue to be necessary in supporting Haiti, and, accordingly, the peace operation that will succeed MINUSTAH will play a key role, together with the country team. That is why we fully share the Secretary-General's assessment that a responsible transition in the United Nations presence, grounded in the achievements of the past 13 years, is required. Only in that way can we keep from losing what we have gained on the road to stability and development. We reiterate the importance of always keeping in mind the conditions on the ground, and especially of avoiding security gaps. Coordination among all actors will be crucial.

Challenges to making progress in sustainable development remain. However, the main humanitarian challenge is the need to tackle the cholera epidemic. Chile fully supports the new approach of the United Nations in that connection, and we recently made a contribution to the trust fund established to combat the disease. However, funding is still very low, so we call on the international community to contribute.

In addition, given the magnitude of the efforts required, we find it difficult to believe that the new United Nations mission in Haiti would not be linked to the tasks that must be fulfilled. We reiterate our support for the work of the Senior Adviser on the Impact of Cholera in Haiti.

Chile will continue to promote United Nations support for the new Government and the Haitian people and to bolster the development of public policies aimed at economic development, the consolidation of the rule of law and the political participation of the country's citizens. After 13 years and the withdrawal of our troops, we will continue to support Haiti. Indeed, our assistance during the period from 2015 to 2018 represents nearly half of the what Chile earmarks for the entire region.

This is an appropriate time to pay tribute to all the men and women of various nationalities who have served in MINUSTAH, particularly those who have given their lives for peace.

In conclusion, I reiterate my country's commitment to Haiti and its people, reaffirming the importance of continuing to support this sister nation, which has sovereignty over its own development. As President Bachelet pointed out in her latest visit to that country a month ago: "We are sure that the road that Haiti has started down with the support of the international community will bear fruit sooner rather than later."

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

**Mr. Gómez Camacho** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you, Madam President, for your invitation to participate in this meeting.

We welcome the fact that Haiti is on the path of institutional normalization with the holding of elections, the inauguration of a new president and the restoration of constitutional order. We recognize the support of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the international community in that process. The arrival of the new Government in Haiti provides us with the opportunity to work with new partners, who are the principal persons responsible for the destiny of their nation, and who, with the support of the international community and the United Nations, can focus their efforts on the development challenges that Haiti faces.

I am particularly grateful to the Secretary-General for his report on MINUSTAH (S/2017/223), and we take due note of his recommendations on the gradual drawdown of that mission before November 2017 and the establishment of a successor mission. The new mission, which is focused on strengthening Haitian institutions, in particular the Haitian National Police, is particularly welcome. However, the mission needs to have a mandate and be given the capacity to assess the human rights situation on the ground. The transition of the mission must be carried out in a responsible, progressive and prudent way so as to avoid a security vacuum. This new stage is favourable for showing the capacity of the United Nations and its Members to handle transitions, assess progress and adjust peacekeeping operations to political and security contexts.

We must ensure the foundations of sustainable and lasting peace in Haiti. The drawdown of MINUSTAH must not mean that the United Nations system is failing to support that country. On the contrary, like all other States, Haiti must meet the goals of sustainable development. The United Nations, with the cooperation of the international financial institutions, should organize its efforts so as to reach concrete and long-term solutions for achieving those goals.

To that end, it is fundamental that, first, there be maximum coordination among all the components of the United Nations system present on the ground. The future Resident Coordinator will have to ensure that all actions are consistent with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Secondly, the health situation in Haiti must be improved, with particular attention to coordinating, under the leadership of World Health Organization and the Pan American Health Organization, the effective provision of health services and efforts to address the ravages of the cholera epidemic in the country, for which we must support the new approach of the Secretary-General. Thirdly, efforts must be undertaken to build infrastructure in the water, sanitation, roads, transportation and education sectors. Fourthly, Haiti must be supported as it seeks to take steps to reintegrate returnees in a positive manner.

Before concluding, I would like to reiterate Mexico's commitment to sustainable peace in Haiti and to the development of the country, as well as to the work of the Economic and Social Council's Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti, in which my country participates.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

**Mr. Ramírez Carreño** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela wishes to express its heartfelt condolences to the delegations of Egypt and Somalia and to their Governments and peoples on the appalling terrorist attacks committed in their countries. We strongly condemn these criminal acts and reiterate our absolute rejection of such actions by terrorist groups. We also call on the international community to come together once and for all to put an end to this scourge.

We wish to extend our congratulations to the delegation of the United States on presiding over the work of the Security Council this month. We also welcome the presence of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), Ms. Sandra Honoré, whose work at the helm of the Mission has been guided by her firm commitment and dedication to bringing about stability and development for the Haitian people. We also welcome the presence of the representative of Haiti.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reaffirms its commitment to peace and democracy in Haiti, and we congratulate the Government and the people of this brotherly country on the successful holding of presidential, legislative, municipal and local elections. In this connection, we congratulate the President of the Republic of Haiti, Jovenel Moïse, on his election.

The peacebuilding process in Haiti benefited from resolute support on the part of the international community and from the good offices of the United Nations and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. These forums have over the past few years taken diplomatic and logistical measures to bring about stability and well-being for the Haitian people, supporting this brotherly country in strict accordance with the principles of sovereignty, independence and self-determination.

Despite these encouraging developments, serious challenges remain on the economic, social and structural fronts in Haiti, reflections of a history plagued with political turbulence and interference, which have led to institutional fragility and undermined social justice in this brotherly Caribbean country, the first to obtain its independence in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

Therefore, in this new phase of the institutional life of Haiti, we must continue to provide support to its authorities, with a view to achieving the goals agreed upon within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals and ensuring that no one is left behind. It is for this reason that we encourage the international community to continue to cooperate with the Haitian people unconditionally and in a manner devoid of any political pressure, focusing on its social development agenda, especially in terms of eradicating poverty and reducing inequality, and with emphasis on the consequences of the natural disasters that Haiti has suffered.

Over the past few years Haiti has been impacted by large-scale natural disasters that have had a devastating effect on its people and on its economic and institutional structure. The January 2010 earthquake and Hurricane Matthew caused the country's general situation to deteriorate even further, especially on the humanitarian front. In addition, Haiti has faced the repercussions of the cholera outbreak and the spread thereof since 2010. This tragic context requires a sustained commitment on the part of the international community to strengthen its cooperation mechanisms aimed at assisting the Haitian people.

We also must devise a robust and timely response to help the Haitian authorities to strengthen their cholera-elimination plan by 2022 so as to help bring about a transition from urgent humanitarian interventions to programmes geared towards development in Haiti. It is also necessary to translate into concrete action the new focus of the United Nations in the fight against the spread of cholera under the programme approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 71/161. We hope that the budget cuts will not affect these humanitarian programmes.

We are at a critical time at which we must reflect on the effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping operations, in the context of the end of MINUSTAH's mandate in mid-October this year. Venezuela recognizes that to date the Mission has helped to achieve stability and to achieve important objectives in Haiti, but the Security Council must also be aware that it has made mistakes. We must therefore question the pre-eminence of a security-based vision that has sidelined the strengthening of the institutional capacities of the Haitian State.

In this context, we welcome the recommendations of the Secretary-General contained in his report (S/2017/233) and the conclusions of the strategic assessment mission, which carried out its work following the elections. We deem appropriate the caution expressed in the recommendation that there be a phased, orderly withdrawal of the military contingent in Haiti, which will help to fulfil the mandate of supporting the efforts of the Haitian authorities to ensure the country's stability in the process of the strengthening of their democratic institutions.

The close of MINUSTAH must mark the beginning of a new phase of political stability in Haiti and the end of military interventions focused on security in Latin America and the Caribbean. The United Nations successor mission to support justice in Haiti must be focused on helping its authorities strengthen the rule of law and social development.

Venezuela, as the second most active country in the region in terms of bilateral cooperation with Haiti, is fully committed to development, political stability and social stability in a free and sovereign Haiti. The Bolivarian Government of President Nicolás Maduro Moros has continued the legacy of Comandante Hugo Chávez Frías, providing sustained assistance to the people of Haiti on the basis of the principles of solidarity, complementarity and reciprocity. In the framework of the Petrocaribe Energy Cooperation Agreement and the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, we will continue to support various initiatives and projects that have been given priority by the Government of Haiti targeting the areas of social development; humanitarian assistance; infrastructure construction, rehabilitation and maintenance; and education.

Finally, I should like to point out that the people of Haiti, the homeland of Pétion, from which Simón Bolívar drew inspiration to liberate our America, are dignified and brave people that have fought tirelessly for their freedom, self-determination and indepedence. All Haiti wants and needs from the international community is cooperation, in a spirit of solidarity, free of conditions or political blackmail — the only kind of cooperation that will enable Haiti to move forward and determine its own destiny in a sovereign manner.

**The President**: I now give the floor to the representative of Peru.

**Mr. Meza-Cuadra** (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of my country, Peru, which has also suffered from terrorism, we would like to express our solidarity with and support for the countries that have been victims of terrorist attacks.

(*spoke in English*)

I now have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Friends of Haiti, which includes Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, France, Guatemala, the United States, Uruguay and my country, Peru.

I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, for having convened this debate to discuss the latest report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) (S/2017/223) and its observations and recommendations following the strategic assessment mission to determine the future presence and role of the United Nations in Haiti.

The Group of Friends welcomes the presence of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Haiti, Ms. Sandra Honoré, and wishes to thank her for her comprehensive briefing and for the role that she has been playing to support the political process in Haiti and the professionalization of the police and in the maintenance of a secure and stable environment.

The Group of Friends acknowledges the important role that MINUSTAH has played in ensuring stability and security in Haiti, expresses its deep appreciation and gratitude to the personnel of MINUSTAH and to all Member States which have contributed to it and pays tribute to those who have been injured or killed in the line of duty.

The strengthening of the rule of law and democratic institutions, establishing a political culture conducive to democratic stability, and improving socioeconomic conditions are the key elements needed to achieve greater security, stability and prosperity in Haiti. In that regard, the Group of Friends recognizes the major milestone towards stabilization that was achieved with the peaceful completion of the electoral process and the return to constitutional order on 7 February 2017. It commends the Haitian authorities, in particular the Haitian Provisional Electoral Council and the Haitian National Police (HNP), for their efforts towards ensuring that the elections were conducted in a credible and inclusive manner and held in a largely peaceful environment.

The Group of Friends also congratulates the new President of the Republic of Haiti, Mr. Jovenel Moïse, and welcomes the new Government led by Prime Minister Jack Guy Lafontant, and sends its wishes for success in this new stage.

The Group of Friends emphasizes the importance of national ownership, inclusivity and the role that civil society can play to advance national peacebuilding processes, and reiterates the vitality of the commitment by the Government of Haiti to strengthen the rule of law and make further progress in the justice and security sectors.

The Group of Friends welcomes the ongoing strengthening, professionalization and reform of the HNP, while noting the need for continued international support for the Haitian police, and affirms the importance of the HNP's strategic plan for the period 2017-2021, developed on the basis of a joint HNP-United Nations capacity and needs assessment.

The Group of Friends stresses that no genuine stability, sustaining peace or sustainable development can take place in Haiti without strengthening democratic institutions and democratic processes. In that context, the Group emphasizes the importance of promoting the rule of law through the strengthening of Haitian institutions, and further reaffirms the responsibility of MINUSTAH for supporting the Haitian State by promoting improved governance structures, transparency, the independence of the judiciary, and the promotion and protection of human rights, in accordance with its mandate.

In that regard, the Group of Friends encourages the Government of Haiti to make progress in the field of justice and human rights. The Group of Friends recognizes that strengthening national human rights institutions and respect for human rights, including the rights of women and children, respect for due process and combating criminality, sexual and gender-based violence, putting an end to impunity and prolonged pretrial detention, and ensuring accountability are essential to ensuring the rule of law and security in Haiti, including access to justice. The Group of Friends reaffirms its solidarity with, and commitment to, the people and the Government of Haiti in their pursuit of stability, reconstruction, recovery, socioeconomic development and democratic consolidation.

The Group of Friends welcomes General Assembly resolution 71/161, entitled "The new United Nations approach to cholera in Haiti," which intends to renew the Organization's efforts aimed at eliminating the transmission of cholera and at addressing the suffering of its victims. The Group of Friends notes that the implementation of that new approach will fall under the responsibility of the United Nations country team under the coordination of a deputy representative of the Secretary-General, a humanitarian coordinator or a resident coordinator. The Group of Friends notes that, while important progress has been made, Haiti continues to face significant humanitarian challenges, especially in the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew.

Furthermore, the Group of Friends affirms that progress in the reconstruction of Haiti and in its socioeconomic development — including through effective, coordinated, appropriate international development assistance, given the increased Haitian institutional capacity to benefit from such assistance — is crucial to achieving sustaining peace and stability. The Group of Friends reiterates the need for security to be accompanied by sustainable development in its social, economic and environmental dimensions, efforts in which the Government of Haiti plays a leading role, with the assistance of the United Nations country team.

The Group of Friends welcomes the report of the Secretary-General of 16 March 2017 (S/2017/223), which includes observations and recommendations by the strategic assessment mission, as requested by the Security Council in resolution 2313 (2016). It also welcomes the Secretary-General's recommendation that a new United Nations mission be established in Haiti following the termination of MINUSTAH by 15 October, in order to continue to assist the Government of Haiti in consolidating gains by reinforcing Government institutions and strengthening the national capacity for the rule of law, police development and human rights.

The Group of Friends recognizes the important contribution of MINUSTAH to the stabilization in Haiti and that the moment has come to start a responsible transition to a new phase of United Nations activities in the country, focused on strengthening the rule of law institutions in Haiti, prioritizing support and capacity-building for the HNP, and engaging in human rights monitoring and reporting, as set out in paragraph 62 of the Secretary-General's report.

The Group of Friends looks forward to a gradual and responsible transition moving forward in the new peacekeeping mission.

*The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.*

United Nations

S/PV.7921

# Security Council

Seventy-second year

*Provisional*

## 7921st meeting

Wednesday, 12 April 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

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|---|---|---|
| *President*: | Mrs. Haley | (United States of America) |
| *Members*: | Bolivia (Plurinational State of) | Mr. Llorentty Solíz |
| | China | Mr. Liu Jieyi |
| | Egypt | Mr. Aboulatta |
| | Ethiopia | Mr. Alemu |
| | France | Mr. Delattre |
| | Italy | Mr. Cardi |
| | Japan | Mr. Bessho |
| | Kazakhstan | Mr. Umarov |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Safronkov |
| | Senegal | Mr. Seck |
| | Sweden | Mr. Skoog |
| | Ukraine | Mr. Yelchenko |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Mr. Rycroft |
| | Uruguay | Mr. Rosselli |

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

## Adoption of the agenda

*The agenda was adopted.*

## The situation in the Middle East

**The President**: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Staffan de Mistura, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. De Mistura.

**Mr. De Mistura**: The stakes in Syria today are very high; we all know why. In the light of recent developments, two paths lie before us: one is more outrages, more destruction and death, stoked by regional and international divisions or even escalation and deeper confrontation. That is what all Syrians fear, and I share their fears.

But there is another path — more serious discussion, a real de-escalation and ceasefire, and a rallying behind the only way out of the Syrian nightmare. We urgently need a consensus among major stakeholders to support concretely the United Nations-led negotiation process, and this is the occasion for doing it with the goal of attaining a package for an orderly, mapped-out, credible and irreversible agreed political transition as per resolution 2254 (2015).

Before the events of last week, we had made modest but incremental progress towards that goal. The fifth round of intra-Syrian talk in Geneva saw no breakthroughs — let us be frank — but no breakdown, either. The parties engaged — truly engaged — on substance for nine full days, which was no small feat. The discussions were mostly business-like and correct, and on the final day they all told me that they were ready to return to Geneva for a sixth round in May, at our invitation.

The Government and the opposition discussed in parallel, in the format of proximity talks, all four baskets: governance issues, constitutional process issues, election issues and counter-terrorism, security governance and confidence-building measures. These discussions were framed by the goal of a political transition, while preserving — obviously, we do not want mistakes like those we have made in the past — the sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity of Syria within the context of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex), the statements of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG), and resolutions 2118 (2013), 2254 (2015), 2268 (2016) and 2336 (2016). Council members are all familiar with these, since they adopted them.

Yes, the delegations preferred to focus on different issues and yes, the gaps are still wide, but everyone in Geneva did engage on all baskets. They also discussed general principles regarding the character of a future, post-transition Syrian State. These United Nations ideas remain living points that can be further developed as the negotiations progress on the substance of each of the baskets. One day soon, we hope, all of these discussions must come together into a package for an overall negotiation — a real negotiation.

While it was premature to secure common understanding at this stage, some points became quite clear or more clear than before, at least to me, and perhaps to the Syrians, too. For example, I felt a growing appreciation that the basis of transition must be legally and constitutionally solid and the journey and destination well-mapped out and agreed upon. I had hoped that we could have proceeded in more detail on the constitutional dimension, which has potential for how to ensure the constitutional basis of the transition and how Syrians in transition mode might write and agree a new constitution. Nevertheless, there was a deepening of the process, and this should not be underestimated.

But now, let us be frank, this fragile progress is indeed in grave danger. Already in Geneva, the talks were overshadowed by an intensification of fighting on the ground and continued lack of safe, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access. I sent formal written appeals to the Astana ceasefire guarantors the Russian Federation, Turkey and Iran. I urged all with influence and leverage to restore the credibility of the ceasefire and to do more to ensure that the United Nations can reach 4.7 million people in hard-to-reach and besieged areas. We are ready to do so.

Displacement also has continued. Over the past month, more than 6,000 firefighters and their families have been evacuated from Al-Waer to Idlib as part of local agreements. We have also learned of serious developments regarding the so-called four towns.

Political statements issued after the Geneva talks also sent some warning signals. The Government stated its intention to reconquer the entire territory of Syria rather than emphasize a ceasefire with real negotiations. Some opposition voices, on the other hand, also expressed support for military offensives, including battles led by internationally prohibited terrorist groups, or even cast doubt on the need to return to Geneva and give priority to military solutions. Then, as representatives from over 70 countries and international organizations gathered in Brussels in what was supposed to be and has been an important meeting regarding the future of Syrian to address Syrian humanitarian needs and commit to a post-transition reconstruction, which is terribly needed, we witnessed the horrors inflicted by chemical weapons on innocent Syrian victims, including children, women and men, in Khan Shaykun.

This outrage shocked the conscience of the whole human family. People all over the world also realized once again that the Syrian calamity is not just an affront to our shared values, but that it can affect the lives of citizens of any land, particularly if chemical weapons are used and war crimes, terrorism, mass displacement and unending war are accepted as something that we have to live with. The Syrians cannot live with it and neither can we, wherever we are.

A few days later, the United States targeted Al-Shayrat air base with a strike of 59 Tomahawk missiles. Under-Secretary-General Feltman briefed the Council on that extremely serious development on Friday (see S/PV.7919). Since then, we have seen more fighting and violence, with new claims of the use of cluster munitions in inhabited areas, barrel bombs and incendiary weapons, including in close proximity to Khan Shaykhun itself.

The Secretary-General has made clear his own position. He is appalled by the chemical weapons attack in Khan Shaykhun and calls for accountability for such crimes. In the aftermath of the United States strike, he is mindful of the risk of escalation and appeals for restraint. He calls for for reinstating a nationwide ceasefire and for a refocus on the need for a political solution, which is also essential in the fight against terrorism.

This is a time for clear thinking, strategy, imagination and cooperation. on the ground. Those who do not want a negotiated a political settlement — we call them spoilers, as Council members know — are stopping at nothing to undermine the political process. They want us to fall into their trap. We must not allow that to happen. We must all resolve that the time has come for the intra-Syrian talks to move beyond preparatory discussions and into the real heart of the matter, across all four baskets, in order to secure a meaningful negotiated transition package.

The United Nations is ready to do its part. I have consulted with the Secretary-General, and I personally remain at my post and will continue to serve, especially in view of the current emergency. I am ready to reconvene talks in May, and the United Nations is ready to offer a real, substantive starting point for discussion and negotiations among the Syrians. But let us see a few things sorted out first, if we can.

As we speak, United States Secretary of State Tillerson is in Moscow to meet with the Russian Government. We welcome that direct, high-level diplomatic engagement at this crucial moment between the United States and Russia. I was in Moscow myself just before the last round and in Washington, D.C., yesterday. I participated on behalf of the United Nations in the trilateral encounter with the United States and Russia during the Geneva talks. Those two countries, the co-chairs of the ISSG, have serious differences — we know it — but also common interests and, indeed, responsibilities. They must find a way to work together in order to stabilize the situation in a deliberate, realistic and concerted way in support of the political process. Indeed, the Council, the region, and the ISSG members need to unite behind one process of mediation in Geneva.

We also need the ceasefire guarantors to step up and deliver now. Important countries have assumed the responsibility as guarantors. Those guarantees are being put to a severe test. Next week, the guarantors will meet in Tehran for a working-level meeting before a higher-level meeting in Astana planned for early May. We urge them to work towards renewing the ceasefire and on confidence-building measures linked to the ceasefire, along with a continued effort to fight terrorism. Astana must bring forth Geneva and vice versa. That is why the United Nations will be in Tehran and Astana, and provide whatever technical support it can to what we consider a very important step.

It has been said so many times. We have said it together so many times, but I will say it again: there can only be a political solution to that bloody conflict. There is no military solution despite what some try or believe. That is what I hear from Syrians from all walks of life. That is what we have been told from those who participated in the United Nations Civil Society Support Room and by the Women's Advisory Board. That is the voice of the Syrians. That is what members of the Council have long agreed upon. Let us therefore view this moment of Crisis — and it is a moment of Crisis — as a watershed and an opportunity, perhaps, for a new level of seriousness in the search for a political solution.

**The President**: I thank Mr. De Mistura for his briefing, and we greatly appreciate his commitment to and leadership on this issue.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

**Mr. Rycroft** (United Kingdom): I would like to thank Staffan de Mistura for his briefing and his unrelenting efforts to secure a political solution to the conflict in Syria. He has our continued full support.

Despite his efforts and those of the Security Council and the international community, the people of Syria have been denied a political solution for more than six years. They have suffered over six years of ever-increasing and ever-escalating barbarity, failed ceasefires and full storms. For more than six years, the Council has been held to ransom by Russia's shameless support for the Al-Assad regime — support, which the regime is flaunting. Throughout that time, we have met in this Chamber to discuss atrocity after atrocity, while hoping that Al-Assad had finally reached the depth of his cruelty and would finally see the need for dialogue. Yet every time without fail he just plunged to new lows.

Chemical weapons scientists in the United Kingdom have analysed samples obtained from Khan Shaykhun. Those have tested positive for the nerve agent sarin or a sarin-like substance. The United Kingdom therefore shares the United States assessment that it is highly likely that the regime was responsible for a sarin attack on Khan Shaykhun on 4 April. That sickening use of chemical weapons — weapons that Al-Assad had agreed in 2013 to destroy — is just the latest in a long list of abhorrent attacks. With that attack, he has made clear that he is not committed to a ceasefire or the Astana process, thereby ruining Russia's credibility. As we mourn the victims of the chemical attack on Khan Shaykhun, we must not forget the 13.5 million people who, thanks to Al-Assad, are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance and a long overdue peace. It is clear today as it has been for some time that there can be no place for Al-Assad in Syria's future.

There is however a way to end the nightmare that the Syrian people continue to suffer. The 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and resolution 2254 (2015), which we unanimously adopted, chart the way to peace in Syria. We have a Special Representative in Staffan de Mistura who is rightly determined to keep the political process alive and pursue a renewed United Nations-facilitated effort. We have in our position prepared to take a pragmatic approach to discussions, and we have millions upon millions of Syrians inside and outside the country crying out for long overdue peace. Yet we are still here in this Chamber with the regime showing no interest in peace, encouraged by Russia's support in the Council to continue dropping bombs and using chemical weapons.

Russia has repeatedly abused its use of the veto to protect the regime and defend its use of chemical weapons. What has Russia received in return for its use of the veto seven times during six years? Let me tell everyone. Russia's initiative in 2013 to dismantle Syria's chemical weapons has been exposed as a shambles. Russian pride in the Astana process has been turned into humiliation, and Russia's credibility and reputation throughout the world have been poisoned by its toxic association with Al-Assad. It has chosen to side with a murderous barbaric criminal rather than with its international peers. It has chosen the wrong side of history. However, it is not too late for Russia to change course. It is not too late for Russia to fulfil its responsibilities as a permanent member of the Security Council. It is not too late for Russia to use finally its influence over the regime to end the conflict.

Those efforts must begin meaningfully with attempts to end the use of chemical weapons and barrel bombs — real efforts to bring about a ceasefire and ensure proper humanitarian access. In doing so, Russia can establish the space needed for a renewed push on the physical process that leads to that political transition to a Government that represents all Syrians. Should it do so and choose that path, we stand ready to work with Russia to preserve Syrian institutions through the political transition. We Stand ready to find ways of cooperating with Russia to counter Da'esh and other international terrorist threats. We stand ready to engage with Russia as a constructive partner on the Council. While Al-Assad offers Russia only shame and humiliation, we offer Russia something else — the chance once again to work with the international community as a credible member.

Finally, the Syrian people have waited for more than six years. Hundreds of thousands have died. Countless hospitals, schools and homes have been destroyed. Now more than ever, the international community must come together to end that senseless conflict. That is why we stand shoulder to shoulder with the United States and its decision to take military action against the Sharyat airfield from where last week's attacks were launched. We stand shoulder to shoulder with our allies from the Group of Seven and all those who are committed to deter the future use of chemical weapons and finally bring peace to Syria.

**Mr. Aboulatta** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): We meet once again to discuss a crisis that has resulted in hundreds of thousands of innocent victims, displaced millions of families and contributed to establishing a safe haven for tens of thousands of mercenaries and terrorists whose presence is a threat to the region and the world. Despite the fact that Syria's humanitarian and security disaster and the Syrian conflict are among the top priorities of the media, politicians and, for several long years, the Security Council's agenda, and while we have repeated the same condemnations and expressions of compassion countless times, that disaster continues unabated and without mercy. As the years go by, the crisis only deepens and becomes increasingly complex to such an extent that a political situation, which should have been the definitive solution, has now become only a first step to try to contain the disastrous repercussions that the Syrians and the people of other countries in the region continue and will continue to suffer for many years.

I deplore the fact that there have been so many times throughout all these years when we thought that a political solution was within reach, that the outline of a settlement was clear in our minds and in the international documents we produced, that there was a consensus expressed in those documents. Now, once again, we are faced with a another conundrum another breakdown that is evidence of a new international and regional polarization. Instead of managing to bring the various Syrian parties together, the international community has forced them to dig in their heels to defend false hopes of achieving a victory that is impossible to achieve. The march to such an illusory victory will only increase the suffering of the Syrian people.

We have issued many warnings about how serious it is to accept this polarization both within and outside the Security Council. I have said more than once that this regional and international rivalry will lead only to more deaths. Failure to interfere or to support one of the parties in the Syrian conflict does not mean that one is abdicating one's responsibilities. Quite the country, it simply means that there will be no winner in this crisis and that as long as the crisis continues the suffering of our Syrian brothers and sisters will also continue.

We have sought to reach an agreement in the Council and outside it to put an end to a proxy war that threatens the future of everyone. I would like to call once again on the various international actors, particularly the joint chairmanship of the International Syria Support Group, Russia and the United States, to work as quickly as possible to reach a political agreement. I would also like to underscore that cooperation is best way to counter those who are trying to undermine the possibility of reaching a political settlement.

Those who exploit the vacuum created by polarization are trying to undermine all attempts to end the crisis. That is why I would like to call on all the Syrian parties, regardless of their orientation, to act responsibly and engage in serious and objective negotiations in good faith and without preconditions for the future of the country under the auspices of Special Envoy De Mistura. I call on them to set aside their narrow interests and ask them to understand that, if they do not do so, they and the Syrian people will be the losers in this conflict.

Once again, I recall that the interests of the Syrian people and of these various parties will not be served by acting in the interests of the parties' foreign sponsors; that will lead only to more destruction and further deepen the disaster in Syria, a country that has made significant contributions to a Muslim, Arab and international culture. I am not exaggerating when I say that achieving an agreement based on the interests of the Syrian people will force everyone to accept the will of the Syrian people.

Due to the gravity of Syria's experience and the Security Council's inability to agree to open an investigation into the Khan Shaykhun events, I reiterate our call to move forward and investigate these events in a clear, neutral and independent manner. I would like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. De Mistura, for his efforts, and reiterate that Egypt will spare no efforts in supporting his work pursuant to resolution 2254 (2015) and the road map that has been adopted.

**Mr. Delattre** (France) (*spoke in French*): A week ago, the regime perpetrated another chemical-weapons attack. At least 86 people died from asphyxiation near Idlib; hundreds were injured. The symptoms observed, as well as the dramatic number of deaths, are indicative of the use of a neurotoxic agent, probably a mixture based on sarin. The decision of the United States to strike the Al-Shayrat air base was a response to the gravity of the act and the threat. It sent the Syrian regime a message it should have heard long ago — its time of impunity has now passed.

Together with the United States and the United Kingdom, France has proposed a draft resolution which will be put to a vote in the Security Council shortly. Its simple and balanced text condemns the 4 April attack and reaffirms United Nations support for the investigation of the Fact-finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic into the circumstances of this attack and the nature of the substance used. It is a matter of bringing the Council together around a fundamental objective: the protection of the international non-proliferation regime, which has been flouted in Syria, and the fight against the impunity of the perpetrators of chemical attacks.

Beyond the tragedy of Khan Shaykhun, all of Syria offers a landscape of devastation and desolation today. The cessation of hostilities, as guaranteed by the 30 December agreement and the Astana process, no longer exists. The regime's supporters never acted seriously to respect it. The humanitarian situation is deteriorating day by day. Throughout the country, the regime is tightening its grip around civilian populations by refusing to grant the authorizations needed to carry out the monthly plan of humanitarian convoys. Let us not deceive ourselves. We are seeing here a deliberate policy of obstruction and siege designed to compel opponents to surrender and people to flee, in violation of Security Council resolutions and the fundamental principles of international humanitarian law.

The Syrian regime's allies are responsible for applying all appropriate pressure to force the regime to finally live up to its obligations. In particular, Russia, as the guarantor of the regime of cessation of hostilities announced last December, needs to turn its commitments into action. The immediate urgency must be to force the Syrian regime to finally respect the cessation of hostilities and finally provide access to the necessary humanitarian assistance to all those in need.

Furthermore, the cessation-of-hostilities system needs to be completely revised. We have to avoid the flaws of the previous versions and put in place a more inclusive, coherent, and robust monitoring mechanism. Since last September, France has called for the establishment of such a mechanism for monitoring the cessation of hostilities. Some deny the evidence, but no matter what happens, we can no longer act as if the 4 April attack had not taken place. We can no longer act as if this track record of desolation and chaos is not primarily the track record of the Bashar Al-Assad regime. The attack on Khan Shaykhun is just a reminder of a sinister reality about which France, since August 2013, has never ceased to alert the members of the Security Council.

We must come to an understanding today about the obvious: a political solution leading to a real transition is now more urgent and necessary than ever. As long as the regime keeps itself in power through terror and destruction, with the complicity of its supporters, there will never be peace and reconstruction in Syria. The millions of refugees forced onto roads of exile will have no hope of returning to their homes nor will they ever overcome a terrorist threat that will continue to feed on the violence and desolation that gave rise to it and made it prosper in the first place. The absolute urgency, the priority of the priorities, is therefore the resumption of the negotiations to craft — together — a political solution.

It is therefore incumbent on all of us to exert the necessary pressure on the leading stakeholders so that they can engage in good faith negotiations without delay. In that connection, France renews its fullest support and confidence in Special Envoy De Mistura, whose commitment is exemplary. We commend his announcement of resolutionesumed negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations in mid-May. France supports the start of the next cycle of negotiations on an accelerated timeline with a view to reaching a speedy agreement on a political transition based on the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and resolution 2254 (2015). We must all rise above our political choices, national interests and moral considerations, and shoulder our responsibilities in order to support this solution. That is an imperative that concerns our collective security. It is at the heart of our mandate and a responsibility shared by all members of the Security Council.

In conclusion, recent developments have realigned the situation and highlighted the urgency of the need for a political transition in Syria. We hope that the recent developments have created the conditions for re-engagement of the leading stakeholders with a view to a political solution. Given the tragedy in Syria, which continues to spiral downwards into the deepest of abysses, we are more bound to our duty than ever. We are also faced with the opportunity of injecting new, decisive life into a political solution. Let us make sure that we seize the opportunity. This is a time of truth. Let us make sure that we shoulder our responsibilities at this historical moment.

**Mr. Rosselli** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Special Envoy for Syria De Mistura and his whole team for their tireless work and determination to move forward in spite of all the difficulties faced. We are also very happy to hear that he will continue moving forward in the face of such difficulties. We fully trust Mr. De Mistura and the efforts of Secretary-General Guterres to continue the search for a political solution to the crisis in Syria.

Neither Mr. De Mistura nor Secretary-General Guterres is the main actor in this tragedy. The primary responsibility in this situation falls on Syrians — the Government, the opposition, civil society and religious leaders. It is up to them to assume responsibility for determining their own futures. There is only one way to do that — sitting down and engaging in discussions. Mr. De Mistura has been working specifically on that task, but he is not a person who can make decisions on behalf of the Syrian people. They have to make those decisions themselves.

Another subsidiary responsibility falls on third-party States. They ought to stop interfering in the Syrian conflict in order to advance their own interests. Another responsibility that is no less important falls on the Security Council. The Security Council must exert pressure and seek to persuade the parties to continue negotiating. We should take advantage of the current momentum, which started in December 2016 with the most recent cessation of hostilities and continued with the Astana process and the ceasefire mechanism.

The events of last week strengthen our conviction that there is no possibility of a military solution to the conflict. Only through a political process mediated by the United Nations and agreed to by the Syrians can we find a solution. We would like to reiterate our strongest condemnation of the continued use of chemical weapons in Syria. That applies to last week's attack and all others. An impartial, independent investigation is required to identify who is responsible for this crime and to hold them accountable. We reiterate our appeal to stay calm and refrain from any unilateral action that might lead to an escalation of tensions. The Syrian conflict should be dealt with in a multilateral framework.

We are aware that the absence of a negotiated settlement has only one victim: the Syrian people — those in the street, men, women, children and the elderly. Our collective responsibility is to them.

**Mr. Seck** (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I would like to start by thanking the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Steffan de Mistura, for his tireless efforts in the service of pursuing peace in Syria.

I should also like to acknowledge the spirit of responsibility shown by the Syrian actors during the fifth round of discussions, held in Geneva from 23 to 31 March.

The fact that such discussions have been held as planned, without interruption or abandonment, reflects the commitment and determination of participants to recognize the complexity of such substantive agenda items, such as a political transition, territorial integrity, the fight against terrorism and measures to restore confidence, as well as governance, security and constitutional reform.

The Senegalese delegation expresses the hope that this spirit of sacrifice and persistence, which is really necessary, must continue to impel all parties so that a definitive solution can be reached to the crisis Syrian conflict, which has lasted too long. We reiterate our hope that the cessation of hostilities throughout the Syrian territory will be sustained and consolidated, notably in the framework of the Trilateral Ceasefire Monitoring Mechanism in Astana. We welcome the efforts of the Mechanism's princapl actors: the Russian Federation, Turkey and Iran. It is important that this truce translate into a continued improvement of the humanitarian situation on the ground. My delegation believes that the Astana process should reinforce the political process.

My delegation welcomes the conference on Syria, convened in Brussels on 4 and 5 April at the intiative of the European Union and in collaboration with the United Nations, which registered pledges of $6 billion for 2017 to help tackle the daunting challenges facing Syria, where in six years of conflict the level of development has declined by four decades.

We have said on many occasions that the crisis currently faced by Syria is a multidimensional one; it has political, humanitarian and security aspects, and touches on the issue of non-proliferation. With respect to the security aspect, the fight against terrorism — in particular against Da'esh and the former Al-Nusrah Front — is an absolute priority for us. That is why we reiterate the need to implement a comprehensive strategy that respects international humanitarian law and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

With respect to non-proliferation, I unreservedly condemn — as I did last week — the recent use of chemicals as weapons in Syria. In the same vein, Senegal once again encourages the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, through its Fact-finding Mission, to gather and study, with all the required professionalism, data from all available sources so as to attribute responsibility for the chemical weapons attack that we saw in Khan Shaykhun. We are hopeful that our Council will find itself in the midst of this essential question of accountability, following this vile act, which affected many civilians — including children.

My delegation, as it was compelled to do here five days ago (see S/PV.7915), cannot stress enough the imperative of a peaceful settlement of the dispute in order to face the challenges that have been repeatedly referred to, including chemicals weapons, the proliferation of terrorist groups and, even more serious, an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe. Senegal is convinced that only a negotiated political solution, based on the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and resolution 2254 (2015), will enable us to reach a lasting solution to this conflict. We therefore place great hope in the meeting between the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Mr. Tillerson, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Mr. Lavrov.

Senegal reiterates its calls on the Security Council, the most influential countries, and in particular the International Syria Support Group and its co-presidents, the Russian Federation and the United States of America, to continue to provide the necessary support to the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. De Mistura.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate Senegal's fullest support for Mr. De Mistura's tireless efforts, especially since he has just confirmed his intention to convene the next round of talks in May.

**Mr. Bessho** (Japan): I thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Staffan de Mistura, for his extensive briefing, and commend his efforts to keep the political process moving forward. The first round of intra-Syrian talks in Geneva demonstrated the willingness of all sides to talk seriously with both the Government and opposition groups, undertaking discussions without a major pause or suspension. Mr. De Mistura described for us today that there has been discussion on key substantive issues while pointing out the need to move beyond the preparatory stages.

Regrettably, the relatively positive news from Geneva is outweighed by grim news on the ground. The alleged use of chemical weapons last week is an affront to humanity and a blatant violation of Security Council resolutions. The Council must reaffirm its determination to urgently address this alleged use of chemical weapons. At the same time, we must not lose sight of the humanitarian situation as a whole. Even with a monthly meeting on the humanitarian situation, it is important that we emphasize it here in the context of the political process as well. We were shocked by the use of chemical weapons; but we have also been shocked for many months by the enormous number of besieged people, now at 644,000 according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Japan's position is clear. We will continue our assistance to all Syrian people in need. This means not simply contributing funds, but taking the responsibility to ensure that aid reaches the people who need it. For this reason, our attention turns again to the repeated warnings of the United Nations that bureaucratic impediments are the main obstacles to humanitarian access. We have repeatedly urged the Syrian Government, which bears primary responsibility for this obstructed access, to simplify procedures. Japan is deeply disappointed that even on occasions when the Syrian Government has responded, we have not seen any significant change. We will continue to engage closely with other relevant parties to improve access, but we cannot fully succeed without the cooperation of the Syrian Government.

Last year, Mr. De Mistura often used the metaphor of a three-legged stool for Syria. The first leg, the political process, seems more steady after the recent Geneva talks, and we strongly support United Nations efforts there. The second leg, the ceasefire, is starting to wobble with news about fighting. Japan supports efforts by the three guarantors of the Astana process, the only functioning ceasefire mechanism at the present time. We are also encouraged that Mr. De Mistura is extending support to Astana. The third leg, humanitarian access, seems to be very unstable. We need to see major improvements to send a clear message to the Syrian people that they have not been abandoned.

The facts are clear. The International Syria Support Group is working despite some confrontations. United Nations mediation is making some progress. Humanitarian bodies are doing their utmost under difficult circumstances. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Joint Investigative Mechanism are ready to implement their mandates. But what about the Security Council? We must prove that this institution is also serious about finding a solution to this crisis. Proof is long overdue.

**Mr. Liu Jieyi** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes the convening of today's open meeting and thanks the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. De Mistura, for his briefing.

The Syrian conflict has been going on for six years now, resulting in considerable civilian casualties and destruction of the State. China is deeply sympathetic to the suffering endured by the Syrian people and strongly appeals to all Syrian parties to proceed with the future of the country and the welfare of its people in mind, and to find an appropriate solution to the conflict as soon as possible through dialogue and consultation. Recently, the relevant parties made joint diplomatic efforts, launched the Astana talks on Syria, maintained the overall momentum of the Syrian ceasefire and created the conditions to resume the Geneva talks. China hopes that the Astana talks continue to play an important role in maintaining the ceasefire and advancing the Geneva talks to achieve progress.

A political solution is the only way out of the Syrian impasse. Military means will not solve the problem. In the last round of Geneva talks, all Syrian parties negotiated political governance; constitutional issues, elections, counter-terrorism, security and confidence-building measures. That gave expression to their attitude towards ownership and participation and enabled encouraging progress in the political process in Syria.

In the current situation, all relevant parties should continue diplomatic efforts, prevent the deterioration of the situation in Syria, continue to support the United Nations as the main channel for good offices and support the work of Special Envoy Mr. De Mistura. The Security Council should prioritize the interests of Syria and its people and play its constructive role in advancing the Syrian political process. China appeals to all Syrian parties to continue to maintain the ceasefire, follow the Syrian-owned and Syrian-led principle to gradually develop a comprehensive and durable solution through dialogue and negotiation that is acceptable to all.

The fight against terrorism is an important and pressing issue in the solution to the Syrian issue. The counter-terrorism situation in some parts of Syria has taken on new complexities in recent times. The international community should be highly vigilant about related developments, strengthen coordination and cooperation, unify standards and combat all terrorist organizations listed by the Security Council. China welcomes the Brussels international conference on Syria that was convened recently. China would like to work with the international community and continue to play a positive and constructive role in advancing the political solution to the Syrian issue and in easing the humanitarian situation in the country so as to advance a comprehensive, just and appropriate solution to the Syrian issue as soon as possible.

**Mr. Skoog** (Sweden): I deeply thank Mr. Staffan de Mistura for his efforts. We stand fully behind him, the Secretary-General and the political solution, for which he tirelessly strives and which can be the only way forward.

When we spoke in the Chamber last week (see S/PV.7919), on several occasions we expressed our outrage over the atrocity in Khan Shaykhun, near Idlib. But let us not forget that, every day, the Syrian people continue to suffer the Syrian people continue to suffer the brutality of war in all its forms. Despite the horrifying images and their gruesome description in the world media, heroic efforts by humanitarian workers and endless discussions in the Security Council over the years, the — now routine — brutality has continued unabated. It is high time to end the war.

I believe that we have reached a critical moment. In order to move forward, Sweden calls upon the Council and the wider membership present in this room to redouble efforts on three or four fronts. First, we must reinvigorate the political process; secondly, revitalize the ceasefire, and, thirdly, grant full humanitarian access. I would like to add a fourth point and that is that the Council must fully shoulder its responsibilities.

First, we all know that a political solution is the only way to end the Syrian tragedy, which has now lasted over six years. The shared objective remains a negotiated transitional political process, in line with resolution 2254 (2015). We therefore welcome the conclusion of the fifth round of intra-Syrian talks in Geneva. The next round of talks should resume as soon as circumstances allow in mid-May. We offer our wholehearted support to the Secretary-General's Special Envoy and his leadership, including his efforts to ensure the full and effective participation of women and civil society in the political process. While we welcome the progress from the talks and that both parties have engaged on all 3+1 baskets, we still feel that they need to do more. In the next round, the Syrian Government's delegation needs to seriously, meaningfully and concretely engage on all baskets. The opposition delegation has engaged constructively and maturely, but needs to continue efforts to maintain unity.

Secondly, over the past couple of weeks we have witnessed an intensification of fighting. The ceasefire developed through the Astana process is increasingly threatened. The United Nations-led political process will be seriously at risk without an effective nationwide ceasefire. We therefore urge the guarantors of the ceasefire agreement to live up to their commitments from Astana and to step up their efforts, including towards a more effective monitoring mechanism. We call upon all actors present here today with influence over the parties to help put an end to violations and reduce violence.

Thirdly, we all urgently need to do more to increase humanitarian access. Convoy deliveries during the last week of March shows that access to besieged and hard-to-reach areas is possible when there is a will. We call on the Syrian authorities here today to simplify the approval process, as requested by the United Nations We urgently need a systematic shift to sustained and unhindered humanitarian access. United Nations aid convoys are ready to assist 300,000 people every week who are now suffering in horrendous conditions in hard-to-reach and besieged areas. They must be given the administrative approval to do so.

With regard to the repugnant attack in Khan Shaykhun on 4 April, we regret that the Council has so far not been able to agree on a strong resolution. There must be a rapid, full and impartial investigation to confirm the use of chemical weapons and those responsible for that horrendous attack must be held to account. We will continue to pursue efforts to that end.

Unspeakable atrocities and crimes against humanity have been committed during the conflict. While long overdue, we must now do our utmost to end the war in Syria. We all agree on the need for a sustainable political solution. Let us therefore engage seriously to make it happen. This is a shared responsibility, particularly and not least for the Security Council.

**Mr. Umarov** (Kazakhstan): My delegation expresses appreciation to Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura for his update and commend him on his determined spirit, commitment and leadership. We also welcome our colleague, Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations, Mr. Bashar Ja'afari.

My delegation would like to make the following observations and recommendations. With regard to the chemical weapons situation, the developments of the past week have a direct bearing on the political track. We therefore call on all sides to work towards a compromise so that the political process can move forward. We welcome and support the multifaceted diplomacy being conducted by Mr. De Mistura. We note the efforts made by the United Nations and Mr. De Mistura to settle the Syrian conflict and especially to encourage the participation of almost all major Syrian opposition groups in the fifth round of the Geneva talks. That direction alone will lead to a peaceful solution and end the conflict in Syria. We are optimistic that at the fifth round of talks in Geneva, held from 23 to 31 March, this time the negotiators were able to move from discussing formal and procedural issues to the substantive and political aspects of future peace talks. We believe that relieving the political situation will enhance our political objectives.

The crisis in Syria is still unfolding and has an impact on the entire region. Kazakhstan therefore believes that the regional approach, involving neighbouring countries should be considered to prevent further deterioration. In that regard, my country calls on all countries in the Middle East and the Gulf region to join the guarantor countries in doing everything possible to ensure that the ceasefire regime is respected and observed by all parties and to support the guarantors.

The Astana process is important for achieving confidence-building measures and we call on all parties to work together to achieve a political settlement. Kazakhstan is deeply concerned about the situation surrounding the use of chemical weapons in Syrian. For the sake of the future of the Syrian people, Astana calls on all members of the Security Council to remain as united as when they adopted resolution 2336 (2016) last December, and demonstrate the same solidarity in moving towards a political settlement, in accordance with resolution 2254 (2015), adopted in November 2015.

Kazakhstan welcomes the Declaration of the 28th Summit of the League of Arab States, which is aimed at contributing to a peaceful resolution of the Syrian crisis and acknowledges the enormous efforts of the League. We are grateful to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and His Majesty King Abdullah II in particular, for hosting 1.3 million Syrian refugees, and we call on the international community to support Jordan and the other countries that have accepted Syrian refugees.

Kazakhstan urges all sides to ensure as soon as possible that the United Nations and its implementing partners have unrestricted access, without preconditions, to Syria's besieged areas. It is essential that humanitarian assistance be able to reach people promptly if they are to receive medical care and whatever they need to survive.

**Mr. Alemu** (Ethiopia): I would like to begin by thanking Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura for his briefing on the outcome of the latest round of talks in Geneva, and to take this opportunity to once again express our full support for his tireless and dedicated diplomatic efforts to help bring an end to the Syrian crisis. We appreciate his wisdom and leadership in facilitating the intra-Syrian talks, and we take note of the limited but incremental progress that has been made in the latest rounds, which have enabled the parties to once again sit in the same room and start engaging substantively on the four basket issues involved in a possible settlement of the Syrian crisis.

It is clear that we are meeting today against a backdrop of the reports of the use of chemical weapons on 4 April, which has shocked and appalled all of us here and indeed the whole world. We hope that the alleged incident will not have a serious impact on the political track. The issue now is how, while doing what we must to assure accountability, we can return to honest pursuit of the noble goal of making progress towards a peaceful settlement and thereby ending the suffering of the Syrian people, who have endured so much for the past seven years. We believe that the Foreign Ministers of the Group of Seven (G-7) struck the right note on 11 April in their joint communiqué from Lucca, Italy, when they said that

> "[W]e believe that there is an opportunity to bring this tragic crisis to an end and we hope that all major partners will live up to their international responsibilities and seize this opportunity."

It was even more encouraging to hear them say that if the situation were conducive and others were also willing to meet their obligations, the Group would be prepared to do its part by "pursuing a political settlement and ultimately contributing to the costs of stabilization and reconstruction". As we have said time and again, only a comprehensive political solution can enable that objective to be realized. That is why we must fully support the intra-Syrian talks and the efforts of Special Envoy de Mistura. Once again in that connection, the message of solidarity that came out of the high-level Brussels Conference on support to Syria and the region was indeed timely, and an important ingredient in the creation of a supporting environment for the Geneva talks under the auspices of the United Nations.

Now is the time for the Council to do everything possible to make sure that the peace talks make tangible progress. In that regard, it is absolutely vital that those who have influence on the parties exercise the leverage on them needed to ensure that they seriously and collectively engage in the talks with a clear commitment to ending the conflict. It has become very clear that without the involvement and cooperation of the major Powers and the countries of the region, nothing will move forward. It is with that in mind that we, like Special Envoy de Mistura, look forward to the outcome of the meeting between the Foreign Ministers of the United States and Russia in Moscow today.

We have of course been following the developments on the ground and are deeply disturbed by the continued fighting across many parts of Syria. The military approach should not be allowed to have the upper hand. We believe that the role of the guarantors is critical to ending the violations of the ceasefire and consolidating the Astana process. We very much hope that the next Astana talks, which are expected to take place next month, will be instrumental in that regard. Without full implementation of the ceasefire the prospects for any progress in the intra-Syrian talks will be doomed.

Lastly, what we have understood in the course of the past three months or so on the Council is that the views on a number of important issues concerning the crisis in Syria do converge. Everybody agrees that there is no alternative to a political solution. Everybody also agrees that it is essential to fight terrorism and violent extremism in Syria. We all agree on the importance of ensuring safe and unhindered humanitarian access. Furthermore, everybody agrees that the use of chemical weapons is totally unacceptable and that any party, State or non-State, found guilty of such crimes must be held accountable. We should therefore really capitalize on what unites us in order to ensure progress on finding a lasting political settlement of the Syrian crisis and realizing the hope expressed in Lucca by the G-7 Foreign Ministers. We know that this is easier said than done, but if the necessary political will is there, we do not believe that it is too difficult to overcome the current paralysis and achieve a breakthrough.

**Mr. Safronkov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. De Mistura for his briefing. Russia has been following the March round of the intra-Syrian talks in Geneva very closely and encouraging all the participants to work constructively to arrive at mutually acceptable decisions and compromises regarding a peaceful settlement. In that context, we have been in active contact with the Syrian authorities and with a broad cross-section of the opposition.

We support Mr. De Mistura's efforts and believe that he will enhance them. The fact that there have been developments in the Geneva process, and that the sides have launched parallel conversations on all four of the agreed-on discussion baskets on the agenda and have begun studying the conceptual proposals of Mr. De Mistura's mediation can be considered an achievement. We expect the Geneva process to continue steadily. There should be no prolonged pauses. We already went through that negative experience in 2016. I would like to say to Mr. De Mistura that rather than give up, he should continue his painstaking work with the Syrian delegations, actively encouraging them to conduct dialogue and seek common denominators.

However, the statement by Mr. Rycroft of the United Kingdom showed that he is thinking only about how to make Mr. De Mistura's task more difficult, stop the political process developing and bring confrontation and hostility to the Security Council. But the fact of the matter — and many in the United Nations are already aware of it — is that he is afraid. He has been losing sleep over the possibility that we could be working together with the United States. He is afraid of that. He is doing everything he can to undermine that cooperation. That is why he should look at me. He should not look away. Why is he looking away? This is precisely why he said nothing today about the political process. He did not listen to Mr. De Mistura's briefing, and that was on purpose. He makes insulting demands of the guarantors of the Astana process, but what have he and his allies done to advance the ceasefire? In London and Paris they are receiving opposition groups — illegal armed groups. They were suddenly afraid that things were moving towards peace and a political settlement. They serve the interests of armed groups, many of which have been murdering Christians and other minorities in the Middle East. They are committing acts of terror in churches on Palm Sunday. That is who they care about. They jabe completely lost his way with their anti-regime notions. What do they think they are doing?

So it turns out that for them, regime change is more important than the positions of the majority of the States Members of the United Nations. Mr. Rycroft was not speaking about the item on our agenda today. He has insulted Syria, Iran, Turkey and other States. I would ask you, Madam President, to ensure that the rules of procedure for this meeting are respected, because that is your job when some members are irresponsibly resorting to insulting slang in the Security Council. He should not dare to insult Russia again.

We are nevertheless very grateful to Mr. De Mistura for his work. In the run-up to the next round, further efforts will be required to ensure that the intra-Syrian dialogue is genuinely broadly representative. Every patriotic Syrian party should be able to take part in the negotiations on an equal footing in order to discuss how to preserve Syria as a unified, secular State in which all historical communities can live in peace, as has always been the case, and take part in rebuilding the country. The opposition should have an inclusive and consolidated delegation whose members have a common position that takes account of the views of the key factions. There is no room for arrogance here. We should be thinking not about pride and arrogance but about the future of Syria. That is the substance of Mr. Rycroft's concept document. He should think about the future of his own State, not interfere in these people's affairs. Let them conduct their dialogue calmly. Mr. Rycroft should not interfere with Mr. De Mistura. Look at those mentors!

In seeking a formula for a political solution — and I know that this is Mr. De Mistura's position — we cannot allow any interruption in the work of State institutions, especially the security institutions, which bear the main burden in combating the terrorist threat. If we look at the other countries of the Middle East, Africa and other regions, it is clear that we cannot create State institutions even on paper — and Mr. Rycroft wants to destroy the ones that remain in Syria, one of the most important countries in the region.

We insist on discussions being held without any preconditions. We know that that is his position. Against the backdrop of the political efforts, it is obviously unacceptable for the opponents of the Government in Damascus to try to gain military advantages. We should recall that before the March round of negotiations began, the opposition tried to advance on various fronts, including in the vicinity of Syria's capital. We hope that the relevant capitals will cool the hotheads and that such reckless acts will not be repeated.

This is Mr. Rycroft's responsibility when he professes to support the Astana process. He says one thing in the Security Council but believes another, and then in fact does a third thing. I would like to ask him to do his part of the work. Here are London and Paris working with opposition groups. He and his allies should summon them and tell them to support the Astana process. They should tell them that they should not even think of firing on the Russian Embassy in Damascus. But he will not even agree to put out an ordinary announcement condemning the attack on the Russian Embassy in Damascus, his diplomatic colleagues.

In a situation in which tensions have mounted owing to the missile strike by the United States, the importance of political efforts has only increased. Clearly, provocations such as the incident in Khan Shaykhun will only strengthen the positions of those who favour a military solution. We need to determine the facts and conduct a comprehensive investigation. I was surprised, indeed amazed, to hear that French experts have already reached the conclusion that Damascus is responsible. No one has visited the scene of the crime yet. How do they know?

The fate of the country should be determined by the Syrians themselves, not by someone else. That is final. We, together with the other guarantors, Turkey and Iran — and here I want to also warmly thank the the President of Kazakhstan for his leadership — are ready to continue working on the Astana platform. Russia has been responsible in addressing its obligations regarding the strengthening of the ceasefire. But Mr. Rycroft and his allies should also do their part in working with the opposition groups. Astana cannot serve as a panacea in a situation in which others are working to undermine it.

Significant progress has been achieved in terms of local truces, which have made it possible to ease tensions and normalize people's lives from a humanitarian point of view. Many have spoken today about access to besieged areas, and that is an issue that should be resolved. But let us be fair. Why is food not supplied to areas that are controlled by the Government? What, are they a different kind of people? Let us be honest. We know the situation. Support is needed from capitals that at the moment are providing only empty criticism. The Astana process has a unique and special value. It is aimed at practical weays of ending the violence and, most important, it represents a form of direct support to the Geneva process that Mr. De Mistura is leading. We know that he and the overwhelming majority of States Members of the United Nations greatly value the Astana process.

We would also like to draw the attention of the international community and the United Nations to the significant contamination of Syrian territory by mines, unexploded ordnance and improvised explosive devices. We regularly inform the Council about the significant activities carried out by Russian experts to deal with this problem. We call for the formation of an international coalition to demine Syria. Blackmail to the effect that demining will begin once there is regime change is unacceptable and hypocritical.

The specialized United Nations service could play an important role in that regard. Of course, the humanitarian component is very important in that respect. People need to feel safe, when they return to their homes and economic activity, that their children will not be blown up and civilians will not suffer. At the same time, mines must be cleared from the World Heritage site in Palmyra. Those are the kinds of issues we must work on. We need to discuss problems related to migration — not regime change but mine clearance and conflict resolution. People will return to their homes by themselves; they do not need to be forced to do anything. These are the kinds of issues that need to be tackled. We need to work together on improving the social conditions in which people live.

Instead, international and regional forums are convened where virtual billions are pledged without even the representatives of Syria being present. How is that related to statements made here in the Security Council that the fate of the Syrian people is in their own hands? Many of us are giving serious thought to the post-conflict future of Syria and the return of internally displaced persons and refugees. That would be the most meaningful and important response to the terrorists' acivities.

But to exclude Damascus and the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic from this process is unprofessional, unacceptable, unethical and arrogant. A political settlement is the only way to restore peace in Syria and to ease the tensions in the Middle East through Syria and a political improvement in that country. That is the path towards normalizing the situation in many countries of the Middle East. We have an opportunity to make Syria a model of cooperation towards a settlement, but destructive geopolitical projects will not contribute to that. We will not give them a free pass in the Security Council.

**Mr. Cardi** (Italy): At the outset, allow me to thank Special Envoy De Mistura for his briefing and especially for his leadership in advancing the political process in very challenging circumstances.

After six years, violence and destruction continue to plague Syrian and cause tremendous suffering for the Syrian people. With time, attacks against civilians have become even more barbaricand despicable, if that were possible, as the horrific use of chemical weapons in the air strike in Khan Shaykhun showed last week. Given the current grave circumstances, a political solution that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people and can relaunch the faltering cessation of hostilities, reconsolidate the political process and possibly bring this tragic crisis to an end is needed more than ever. We all have a collective responsibility in that.

In that regard, let me recall the timely discussions that took place yesterday at the ministerial meeting of the Group of Seven (G-7), and then in the G-7 enlarged to some key regional stakeholders, as Ambassador Alemy rightly reminded us. On both occasions, convened by Minister Alfano, all countries conveyed a strong message of support to the political process, and notably to the Geneva intra-Syrian negotiations and the efforts of Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura.

We all need, therefore, to commit to a diplomatic search, not a military search, to support the Geneva talks and advance the political process by swiftly implementing all steps agreed by the Council in resolution to 2254 (2015). As the negotiationss move to the substance of the issues, no rapid major breakthrough can be expected, but we commend the Special Envoy for having kept the parties engaged in the process and committed to discussing the way forward, in accordance with the defined agenda and in line with resolution to 2254 (2015).

The parties should now redouble their efforts to address in detail the substantive matters on the agenda. We have consistently encouraged the High Negotiations Committee to adopt a realistic and flexible attitude during the negotiations. Countries with influence on Damascus should now press the regime to engage seriously in negotiations and avoid dilatory tactics.

The Astana process made an important contribution to the relaunch of the cessation of hostilities. However, the situation on the ground has been deteriorating again, putting a considerable strain on the truce. An effective cessation of hostilities must be pursued as a matter of priority. The Syrian regime has not renounced its intention to achieve military territorial gains, and the ceasefire continues to be violated by all parties. Humanitarian access is denied in besieged areas, notably by the regime. All parties must allow rapid, safe, sustained and unhindered humanitarian access to people in need throughout Syria.

It is paramount that the core guarantors of the Astana process, and more generally the key international stakeholders, exert all their influence in that respect. Progress in Astana on the implementation of the ceasefire, humanitarian access and confidence-building measures feeds, of course, into the Geneva process by creating an environment conducive to the political talks.

Finally, let me underline that progress on the political track is also key to ensuring better and more effective international cooperation in the fight against terrorism, and the effort to end violent radicalization, extremism and terrorism needs to include a serious and genuine effort towards a peaceful transition and reconciliation process. Only a real political transition, we think, will eradicate terrorism from Syria.

**Mr. Yelchenko** (Ukraine): Madam President, I thank you for convening this meeting in the open Chamber.

Let me also thank Special Representative De Mistura for his dedicated efforts and diligent approach as the deep waters of the complex Syria political situation become ever harder to navigate.

Today we are clearly at the low point with regard to the Syrian political situation. Following the latest two rounds of intra-Syrian talks in Geneva, I believe that it is fair to say that, unfortunately, we have not seen the much-desired progress on either of the 3+1 baskets. Be it with respect to political transition, constitution, elections or counterterrorism, there is not much to be optimistic about. The only achievement so far is that we have managed to get two delegations to Geneva. Why? The answer is obvious; it is the lack of political will, particularly from the Syrian regime, to negotiate in full faith on the core issues. The stalled political process may set in motion a vast number of alternative scenarios that nobody would like.

It is only natural that every actor in Syria has a wish-list, yet Damascus and its allies need to understand that a my-way-or-no-way kind of approach — the "ultimate victory" attitude — will lead nowhere, prolong the crisis and feed the extremists. Damascus needs to understand one more thing — the international community has made it crystal-clear that the political solution is the only way out of the Syrian quagmire, and that the recipe for this solution has long been out there. Any progress on the political track will be unsustainable without clear adherence to the letter and spirit of the 2012 Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and resolution 2254 (2015), a transparent and strictly scheduled political transition, and the guidance of the United Nations.

We believe that Russia has all the means at its disposal to influence Damascus and its allied militias to reconsider their militaristic approach, begin supporting political process and national reconciliation, and finally enter negotiations. For some reason, that influence has never been never employed to good ends. I remain convinced that, unless serious pressure is applied on Damascus and an accountability mechanism is established in Syria, we will not see any progress on the political track. The chemical weapons attack on 4 April is a grim reminder of that.

We are discouraged by the absence of real results from the Astana process and the ceasefire negotiated within its framework. One lesson to be learned from that bitter experience is that the proliferation of negotiating platforms does not necessarily bear fruit. It was a good try, but it did not work. It is now time to concentrate all efforts on the United Nations-led Geneva process and ensure that it works. We therefore look forward to the resumption of the intra-Syrian talks in Geneva, hopefully, next month. It will already be high time for Damascus and its allies to demonstrate a change in mindset, intentions and attitude.

**Mr. Llorentty Solíz** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this meeting.

First, let me begin by saying that in the current situation, I believe that there is full agreement among all members of the Security Council that we must support the efforts being made Mr. De Mistura and his team with regard to such a sensitive issue and the work of the Secretary-General. Given that grim scenario, there may be a glimmer of hope at the end of this long, dark tunnel of war that is ravaging the brotherly country of Syria.

Three meetings took place during the Astana process, and there was unanimous agreement in the Security Council pertaining to decisions that were reflected in the longest-lasting ceasefire during the conflict as a result of the efforts of Russia, Turkey, Iran and Kazakhstan. The peace talks under the auspices of the United Nations through the Special Envoy have already enjoyed their fifth round of talks in Geneva on the four baskets, which Mr. De Mistura mentioned, including governance issues, constitutional process issues, election issues and counter-terrorism, among others. Bolivia expresses its most fervent support for the work of Mr. De Mistura and the Geneva and Kazakhstan process, which are both complementary.

Another area of convergence — and I hope that this is not just talk — is that we have all said that the only option for resolving the conflict is through a political process. We therefore call for the joint work of the parties involved to ensure that the peace process be taken forward for and by the Syrian people based on candid, inclusive and constructive dialogue. We urge the parties involved in the crisis to abandon once and for all any provocative action, and ensure, as the Secretary-General said, that they ensure that there is no further escalatory intentions in the crisis. Peace talks must continue without delays and must proceed in a manner that strengthens and consolidates the mandates of resolution 2254 (2015). That is a clear example that it is possible for us to take coordinated and unanimous action together.

As we have said, we believe that any type of unilateral action will only undermine a dialogue process and block the way to peacebuilding in Syria at the expense of millions of lives in that country. We acknowledge the efforts made by the Government and the people of Syria in combating terrorism. We vigorously condemn all terrorist acts as criminal and unjustifiable, whatever their motivation, wherever and whenever they take place, and by whomever they are committed. We reiterate the need to ensure that all States combat terrorism in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and relevant obligations in accordance with international law.

Once again, Bolivia calls on the Council to ensure that we defend mulitilateralism in line with the Charter. We must say that the opposite of multilateralism is unilateralism. Unilateral actions only undermine the dialogue process being taken forward by Mr. De Mistura and the Secretary-General. By the same token, it also prejudices the outcome. We call for an independent, impartial, comprehensive and conclusive investigation of the atrocious chemical weapons attack. Of course, we do not understand the logic behind the chronology of the condemnation following the attack, before an investigation. I do not really understand the rational behind that attitude unless the intention is to bring some sort of pressure to bear on the Moscow talks taking place between Russia and the United States.

I fail to understand the intentions behind introducing a draft resolution that, as we already know, will be vetoed. We have spoken about resolution 2254 (2015), which was unanimously adopted by the Council, and we believe that the international community is calling on the 15 members of the Security Council to remain unified and work together towards achieving peace. Who benefits from war? Who benefits from the fact that the Security Council is not working as one voice? The answer is, first and foremost, the terrorists. My understanding is that we have a common enemy with a name: Da'esh, Jabhat Al-Nusra, Al-Qaida and Boko Haram. Those are our common enemies, and the international community is demanding that the Security Council act jointly, in unison and unanimously to combat that threat to international peace and security.

Who else benefits from the failure of the peace processes to advance and the Security Council's failure to work as one? The answer is the industrial military complex and those who benefit economically from war. They are the ones receiving the best economic guarantees that result from the Syrian and other wars. I read an editorial in the *New York Times* by Charles Blow, who wrote that war is also a very lucrative business from which many people enjoy the benefits.

We hope that the Security Council will assume its responsibility not only under the Charter of the United Nations, but also in accordance with the tenets of humanity, and work as one to free humankind from the nightmare of war and avoid an impasse from which, as we know from the lessons of history, it is very difficult to exit.

**The President**: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United States.

I thank Mr. De Mistura for his helpful and informative briefing today. We appreciate his commitment in this process going forward.

Last week, Bashar Al-Assad yet again terrorized his own people with one of the world's most horrific weapons. Al-Assad's murderous attack shook everyone of us to our core. It once again showed the world that Al-Assad is not a partner for peace. It showed what happens when Al-Assad's allies — Russia, Iran and Hizbullah — decide to lend their support to a barbaric regime instead of joining the world to stop it.

When Al-Assad's planes dropped chemical weapons, his regime violated a resolution of this very Council (resolution 2118 (2013)) and the Chemical Weapons Convention. Al-Assad mocked every assurance the

Russians gave us that there were no chemical weapons in Syria. The United States was compelled to act. We will not allow the use of chemical weapons to go unanswered. We are not going to look the other way. We are watching the regime's actions carefully.

My colleagues from Russia are isolating themselves from the international community every time one of Al-Assad's planes drops another barrel bomb on civilians and every time Al-Assad tries to starve another community to death. People — not just in the West but across the Middle East and the world — are speaking out against Al-Assad's brutality. It is long past time for Russia to stop covering for Al-Assad. It is long past time for Russia to push seriously for peace and not continue to be part of the problem.

The road to peace is long. We will not get a political solution overnight, but we can start by working together to actually de-escalate the conflict. For Russia, getting serious about peace starts by fulfilling its commitment to getting chemical weapons out of Syria. We urge Russia to use its influence to make Al-Assad actually live up to his international obligations. That means giving investigators who are already mandated through existing mechanisms full access to the bases from which the regime launched its chemical weapons attacks and access to anyone who might have been involved.

Russia talks about its commitment to a political solution. It must commit to the Geneva talks. Now is the time Russia needs to show the world whether it genuinely wants to be a part of the political process. We need to see a real ceasefire on the ground. We need to see a credible political process through which Syrians can chart their future. We need to see Russia choose to side with the civilized world over an Al-Assad Government that brutally terrorizes its own people. The United States is ready to do our part. Russia, too, needs to do its part.

Getting serious about peace also means that we have to be honest about Iran's role in Syria. Iran is Al-Assad's chief accomplice in the regime's horrific acts. Standing next to Al-Assad's generals are Iranian advisers whispering in their ears or giving orders. Standing next to Al-Assad's soldiers are Hizbullah militias, with weapons courtesy of Iran and the power to overrule the Syrian military. Iran is dumping fuel on the flames of this war in Syria so it can expand its own reach.

The Council needs to bring attention to Iran's barbaric acts in Syria. We need to collectively demand that Iran stop. We need to make sure that Iran cannot use Syria as a base to keep terrorizing the Syrian people and the entire region.

The Council also needs to be serious about peace in Syria. Month after month, we all repeat the same points in this Chamber. We all say there is no military solution to this conflict, but look at what actually happens on the ground. The Council's relevance depends on taking action to condemn those responsible for violence and to hold them accountable for defying the Council's demands. The Council should not just say that it is in favour of a political solution, but also actively pressure the parties to prove it. That means adopting resolutions that say what we mean — resolutions that we are all willing to uphold.

So what happens next in Syria will depend on what all parties choose to do. For our part, the United States will continue to use influence over any party to push for peace. We will encourage our allies to use their influence on any and all opposition groups, too. We will not support a process that gives cover to Al-Assad while he stalls for time and his forces slaughter the Syrian people, and as we showed last week, we will not stand for the continued use of chemical weapons. There are actions by the Al-Assad regime that we simply will not tolerate.

The United States firmly believes that a political process can work despite the odds. We remain committed to the Geneva process. We are ready to throw our weight and resources behind diplomacy. We are ready to help bring this conflict to an end. But our commitment is not enough. The United States is looking for partners that are serious about using their influence over the Al-Assad regime and towards defeating the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham. Every country needs to do its part. All of us must commit not just in words but also in actions to the same goal — peace in Syria.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, whom we ask to be conscious of time.

**Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Madam President, I hope you will be patient enough, in your capacity as President of the Security Council for this month, to hear what I have to say. I listened carefully to each of our colleagues and have the right and the duty as a founding Member of this international Organization to inform them of the views of my Government.

Some 14 years ago, a few weeks before 19 March 2003, the day of the invasion of Iraq, I was sitting behind the then-Foreign Minister of my country, who occupied the seat where the representative of Italy is now sitting today. I was attending the meeting at which Colin Powell, the former Secretary of State of the United States, spoke about weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in Iraq (S/PV.4701). I was there.

Everyone remembers what the Chairmen of the investigation and inspection commissions said about so-called weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, Ralph Ekeus, Richard Butler, Scott Ritter, Hans Blix and others were among them. They said that there were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and that these allegations were a pretext to justify invading and occupying Iraq.

Evev more heinous, members of the Council undoubtedly remember — or at least some of them do — that in late 2008 the Security Council decided, after the investigation of the alleged existence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction was closed, to bury the archives of the United Nations Special Commission established pursuant to Security Council resolution 687 (1991) and the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, by placing them in vaults, out of reach to anyone except the Secretary-General. The vaults were sealed and can be opened only after 60 years had elapsed. Can you imagine, Madam President, what secrets contained in the archives of those two commissions?

The United Kingdom's exit from the European Union seems to have motivated it to seek out a new role in the world — making and adopting irrational and extreme statements and positions in the Council. We recall the criminal role Tony Blair played in encouraging the invasion of Iraq 14 years ago, fabricating the lie of the existence of Iraqi WMDs and pushing the American elephant to smash rich Iraqi lustre pottery with a brutality that the people of Iraq are still paying for to this day.

I deliver my statement today after an absence of more than three months, as I was leading the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic in shuttle rounds of intra-Syrian talks in Astana and Geneva with a view to launching a serious dialogue that would result in a political solution driven by Syrians themselves without any external interference and unify counter-terrorism efforts. A week ago, we thought that we would be coming to today's meeting to inform the Security Council of the progress recently achieved in Astana and Geneva, give the necessary momentum and support to His Excellency Special Envoy De Mistura and to all parties that are working seriously to reach a political settlement of the crisis in my country, Syria, and coordinate our counter-terrorism efforts.

Despite this optimism, the United States Administration insisted on repeating the same bloody, theatrical play that it staged 14 years ago in thd Council against Iraq. It was a play entitled *The Lie of the Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction*. Once again, the United States Administration is taking the war on terrorism imposed on my country, Syria, to unprecedented and dangerous levels by switching from a proxy aggression through armed terrorist groups, who have been under its control for years, to a new, direct aggression through direct military action against Syria.

The United States has been leading terrorism in Syria along with its allies and agents in the region. It has provided all forms of support to terrorist groups to commit the most heinous crimes against civilians and Syrian infrastructure. Those crimes include the practices of the so-called international coalition. Recent incidents have proven that the coalition has only destroyed infrastructure, bombarded civilians and provided air cover to the Al-Nusra Front, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and other affiliated terrorist groups, as when it bombarded the Syrian Army position on Tharda Mountain, in Deir ez-Zor, on 17 September 2016.

The direct military support and air cover to armed terrorist groups was not only provided by the so-called international coalition. Israel was the first to win the honour of supporting terrorism. Since terrorist groups, including Al-Nusra Front, started their operations in the area of separation, Israel has provided all forms of support to those groups, including medical relief and care to injured terrorists at the expense of the Qatari regime, as members know. Israel has provided air cover by launching airstrikes against positions held by the Syrian Army every time the Syrian Army has been able to gain ground against these terrorist groups. Even worse, Israel has provided direct support to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant through airstrikes launched on 17 March against Syrian Army positions in Palmyra in order to support the operations of the Islamic State in that city.

Similar theatrics took place on the morning of Friday, 7 April. At the time, the United States Administration and its allies felt that the terrorist groups that had been armed, trained and financed by these countries had begun to lose ground because of the heavy blows dealt to them by the Syrian Army and its allies. They launched their premeditated and flagrant attack against Shayrat air base with the pretext of the use of chemical weapons in Khan Shaykhun, a village primarily under the control of Al-Nusra Front. It did not stop there. That attack was preceded by political expediency when the United States decided to exploit the international mechanisms of the Security Council to submit provocative draft resolutions that would put the blame on the Syrian Government for the abhorrent use of chemical weapons and distance any suspicion from the real enemy — terrorists and their supporters.

The dangerous attack had been thought through for many months in the back rooms of intelligence agencies in Tel Aviv, Riyadh, Doha, Ankara, Amman, Washington, D.C., London and Paris. Those same capitals have, over the past years, sought to provide their terrorist agents inside Syria, notably Al-Nusra Front, with toxic chemicals for them to use, placing the blame on the Syrian Government. That was the case in Khan al-Assal on 19 March 2013, in eastern Ghouta on 21 August 2013, in Talmenes on 21 April 2014, and in Sarmin and Qamenas on 16 March, 2015.

I will not go into detail on the more than 90 letters addressed to the Council since the beginning of the crisis. The letters detail the possession by armed groups of chemical elements to be used against civilians and plans to put the blame on the Syrian Government with a view to demonizing the Government in the eyes of Council members and of world public opinion, thereby justifying interference in the internal affairs of Syria. Some of the letters have even detailed the smuggling of sarin gas from Libya through Turkey on a civilian airplane by using a criminal Syrian citizen of the name of Haithem Al-Qasar. Two liters of sarin gas were transported from Libya through Turkey to terrorist groups in Syria. We have given the Council the names, dates, incidents and events, as well as the itinerary of the aforementioned trip from Libya to Syria.

I would like to refer the Council to a statement made by the former French Foreign Minister, Mr. Roland Dumas, in June 2013. In that statement, he said that during a visit to London he was told of a conspiracy against Syria, whose goal was to destroy Syria and isolate its Government, given its anti-Israeli position. That was two years before the start of the crisis in Syria. Mr. Roland Dumas was made privy to a plot to destroy Syria two years before the crisis even started.

I would also like to refer the Council to a report in *Daily Mail* from January, 2013. The report, which was withdrawn and deleted from online shortly after it was published, detailed emails between high-ranking officials in a British corporation , Britam Defence. The emails talked of a plot agreed upon by Washington, D.C., whereby Qatar, in cooperation with Turkey, would finance insurgents in Syria to use chemical weapons. At the time, President Obama only had to draw a red line, saying that any use of chemical weapons in Syria would not be tolerated. That red line was used to justify military aggression against Syria. However, he fortunately backtracked at the last minute when his European allies decided to jump ship, given mounting pressure from international public opinion that led them to reject any interference in Syria.

Documents leaked by Wikileaks prove that the White House had given a green light to a chemical attack in eastern Ghouta, in the suburbs of Damascus, in order to put blame on the Syrian Government. It uses the chemical attack as an incentive for international military aggression against Syria.

Today, the new United States administration, of which we were optimistic, claims that counter-terrorism is one of its priorities, and its allies could not find a pretext except to regress to the same red-line deception and fabricate the incident of chemical weapons in Khan Shaykhun in order to launch an attack against Syria and sabotage the Astana and the Geneva talks, save the armed terrorist groups from their predicament and help other opposition groups shirk their obligations related to the political settlement and counter-terrorism.

Why was that? It was because we had added another element to the talks in Geneva, the basket of counter-terrorism, something that the enemies of the political track in Syria did not like. Otherwise, how could a sane and reasonable person accept the lies, disinformation and accusations against Syria of using chemical weapons that Syria does not even possess? We do not have chemical weapons, as confirmed by the report of the Joint Investigative Mechanism of June 2014 to the Council, when Ms. Sigrid Kaag said on that date that Syria no longer had any chemical weapons. Even worse, those who destroyed the chemical weapons at the time were ships of the United States in the Mediterranean.

This comes at a time when the Syrian army and its allies are achieving crushing victories against terrorism; national reconciliation is being concluded across Syrian towns and regions; and significant steps have been taken in the Astana talks, emphasizing, as Mr. De Mistura said, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. That means controlling the borders with neighbouring States, particularly Turkey and Jordan, preventing the flow of terrorists, ending the hostilities, separating armed groups from Jabhat Al-Nusra and ISIL, and unifying counter-terrorism efforts. Those are the results of Astana; if they were implemented, the Syrian crisis could have ended within 24 hours.

As the Geneva talks started to shape a political vision and a road map for a settlement in Syria, as my country is witnessing a diplomatic openness and visits by parliamentary missions, including Western delegations, which have been briefing the global public opinion about what is really happening in Syria and calling for support to the Syrian Government in its war against terrorism. I put this question to every person who still resorts to logic, reason and law law in this Council to explain this blind madness and brutal desire to burn my country and the region to the ground, as well as to move the international community into a new phase of war and conflict, in which there will be no victors but terrorism, the doctrine of extremism, hatred, and the logic of military might and the law of the jungle.

In the face of this falsification and manipulation to justify the military aggression, my country's Government has sent to you, Madam President, and to other members of the Council a letter referring to the call of the Syrian Government on the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in The Hague to send a technical mission to Khan Shaykhun and to Shayrat air base to uncover the truth about what happened. This means that we, the Syrian Government, want to know who used the chemical gas in my country. We should all say no to a war is being promoted by warmongers and the enemies of law as a normal option — business as usual as they sit comfortably in safety, enjoying their privileges, revenue and arrogance.

During the latest round of talks in Geneva, my country's Government submitted a number of papers to Special Envoy De Mistura, starting with a paper on general principles for a political solution in Syria with a view to finding a logical and normal common ground to start discussing all issues that are an essential part of the debate pertaining to the four baskets. We have also submitted other papers, including one on counter-terrorism. Over the nine days of talks, we discussed all agreed agenda items. Unfortunately, there was no serious partner actually committed to pursuing counter-terrorism and to finding a political solution, let alone the existence of a multitude of oppositions, and not a Syrian opposition.

My country denounces attempts by the United States Administration, Britain and France to sabotage the efforts of the Special Envoy and to block the Geneva and Astana talks. We have engaged seriously, patiently and responsibly in these talks because our people hold us historically responsible for defending the country and staunching the bloodshed. The American aggression will not prevent the Syrian Government and its allies from pursuing counter-terrorism, actively engaging in the next rounds of Geneva and Astana talk, or discussing the agreed agenda and engaging seriously on all issues related to governance, the constitution, elections and counter-terrorism simultaneously. We will also spare no effort to support any genuine endeavour that seeks to reach a political solution that will allow Syrians themselves to decide their own future, whereby only the Syrians themselves determine their future and their options in a manner that would preserve the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria.

To conclude, I was perplexed by the statement made by my colleague from France, according to which he and the other three States or P3 intended to submit today's draft resolution and to put it to vote in shameful diplomatic haste. Such a provocative step comes before a fair international investigation by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Therefore, submitting a draft resolution was a blatant misuse of the Security Council's mechanisms, and it reminds us of similar misuse of by Britain and America against Iraq 14 years ago exactly, on 9 April 2003.

*The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.*

United Nations

S/PV.7922

# Security Council

Seventy-second year

*Provisional*

## 7922nd meeting

Wednesday, 12 April 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

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|---|---|---|
| *President*: | Mrs. Haley | (United States of America) |
| *Members*: | Bolivia (Plurinational State of) | Mr. Llorentty Soliz |
| | China | Mr. Liu Jieyi |
| | Egypt | Mr. Aboulatta |
| | Ethiopia | Mr. Alemu |
| | France | Mr. Delattre |
| | Italy | Mr. Cardi |
| | Japan | Mr. Bessho |
| | Kazakhstan | Mr. Umarov |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Safronkov |
| | Senegal | Mr. Seck |
| | Sweden | Mr. Skoog |
| | Ukraine | Mr. Yelchenko |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Mr. Rycroft |
| | Uruguay | Mr. Rosselli |

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.*

**Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

**The situation in the Middle East**

**The President**: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2017/315, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

**Mr. Rycroft** (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom is honoured to present, on behalf of our other penholders — the United States and France — a draft resolution condemning the events of 4 April in the Khan Shaykhun area of southern Idlib in the Syrian Arab Republic. The events in Khan Shaykhun were the worst of human acts. They have dominated the international agenda over the past eight days. The events of that day and the manner in which the victims suffered mean that the Security Council must act.

When judging how exactly to act, we must recall the Council's determination in 2013, acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations and in multiple resolutions since, to remove and destroy all chemical weapons in Syria, and our subsequent agreements to investigate any and all incidents of apparent further use. We must also recall the Council's determination that those responsible for chemical-weapons use must be held accountable. It is with those determinations in mind that we put forward today's draft resolution.

Our text condemns the events of 4 April in Idlib. It expresses full support to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Fact-finding Mission and the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, already charged with investigating this and all such incidents, and it emphasizes the need for full access by those investigators to relevant sites and recalls the obligations of all parties in Syria to cooperate fully in that regard. We believe that that is the necessary minimum response required of the Council. We thank all Council members that have helped to develop the draft over the past week. We thank the United States as President for tabling the text for a vote, and we urge all Council members to vote in favour.

**Mr. Safronkov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to inform the members of the Security Council that during the course of the negotiations that took place today in Moscow between the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Mr. Lavrov, and the Secretary of State of the United States, Mr. Tillerson, we proposed to the American side that we send a joint statement to the Director-General of the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Mr. Üzümcü, asking him to immediately put together an independent international mission for a visit to Khan Shaykhun, where it is alleged that chemical agents were used, and to the Shayrat air base. The United States Secretary of State is considering that proposal, and we expect that Washington, D.C., will offer it a constructive response, given the current situation.

Given what I have just said and the fact that tomorrow, on 13 April there will be a meeting of the Executive Council of the OPCW in The Hague, where all of these issues will be discussed, we feel that putting the draft resolution to a vote today does not serve a useful purpose.

**The President**: The Council is now ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

*A vote was taken by show of hands.*

*In favour*:

Egypt, France, Italy, Japan, Senegal, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Uruguay

*Against*:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Russian Federation

*Abstaining*:

China, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan

**The President**: There were 10 votes in favour, 2 against and 3 abstentions. The draft resolution has not been adopted, owing to the negative vote of a permanent member of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

**Mr. Rycroft** (United Kingdom): The conflict that has ravaged Syria has lasted for more than six years. For the people of Syria, that must feel like an eternity. Here in this Chamber, we get only so many moments to act, only so many moments to show them that hope is not dead, chances for the world to unite in condemnation of war crimes. Today was one of those moments. What happened in Khan Shaykhun last week was the worst of human acts. United Kingdom scientists have now analysed samples obtained from Khan Shaykhun, and they have tested positive for the nerve agent sarin or a sarin-like substance. We therefore share the assessment of the United States that it is highly likely that the regime was responsible for a sarin attack on Khan Shaykhun.

We recognize the need for a thorough, swift, independent investigation. This afternoon, Russia's Foreign Minister also called for such an investigation, yet Russia has vetoed a draft resolution that would support that investigation. Russia's messages are mixed, and its aims confused. The Fact-finding Mission in Syria of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Syrian people need our political support, something that we as the Security Council should have been able to give. The United Kingdom will continue to give that support and, regardless of today's vote, the work of the OPCW will continue.

We have once again encountered a Russian veto — the eighth time that Russia has used its veto to protect the Syrian regime. Today's veto is even more regrettable given that Russia was the architect of the 2013 agreement to dismantle Syria's chemical-weapon programme, an initiative that has demonstrably failed. Russia cannot now possibly claim that it opposes the use of chemical weapons. Russia has seen the same pictures that we all saw just days ago in this Chamber. How could anyone look at the faces of lifeless children and choose to veto a draft resolution condemning those deaths?

It is indefensible that Russia has chosen to protect the perpetrators of those attacks rather than work with the rest of the international community to condemn them. When those images and videos were broadcast across screens around the world, my team received a message from another child — Bana Alabed, a 7-year-old Syrian girl from Aleppo who, with the help of her mother, has given the world a window into the conflict through Twitter. The message she sent was simple. It was that we can make a difference. We must demand justice for the children. She is one voice, but one that echoes the views of millions of Syrians. Demand justice for the children.

The heartbreaking truth is that a little girl's plea will not be heard in this Chamber. Not today. But regardless of the veto today, we should trust those words. We will hold the regime to account. We will continue to work with our international partners to put an end to any use of chemical weapons and to seek justice for all the victims of these heinous chemical attacks. We will gather at the OPCW in The Hague tomorrow to discuss how best to support a credible international investigation that establishes who was responsible and paves the way to hold the culprits to account.

The catastrophe in Syria is not the way things have to be. Yesterday, Foreign Ministers from the Group of Seven (G-7) and key regional countries came together in Italy to discuss how to move forward from last week's tragedy. They gave strong support to Secretary Tillerson's visit to Moscow today to discuss how Russia could work with the international community to end the tragedy of the war in Syria. Russia has the sort of influence over the regime that could bring its use of chemical weapons and barrel bombs to an end, and could lead to a real ceasefire that would then lead to the resumption of serious political negotiations on a political transition. Those Foreign Ministers indicated that if Russia took those steps, the international community would be ready to work with it to bring peace to Syria, defeat Da'esh and terrorism and reconstruct Syria. That is the choice that Moscow has in front of it. The world now waits to see if Russia will respond to the G-7 and assume its responsibilities as a permanent member of the Security Council to help put a stop to the Al-Assad regime's use of chemical weapons and to work with the international community to bring this tragedy to an end.

**Mr. Delattre** (France) (*spoke in French*): France is devastated by the result of today's voting. We deeply deplore the fact that, thanks to another Russian veto, the Security Council has been unable to agree on a simple, balanced draft resolution condemning and seeking to throw light on what happened at Khan Shaykhun. We nonetheless strove to engage in discussion of the draft in good faith. We have failed yet again to measure up to the responsibility that we have assigned ourselves and to the fundamental values that we are supposed to support and ensure respect for. Almost four years after the Ghouta massacre in August 2013, the Council has taken a terrible step backwards.

The attack on Khan Shaykhun would appear to be the latest example of the abject duplicity of a hard-line regime. Once again, everything about it points to the Damascus regime's clear responsibility for the attack. Through it, the Syrian regime has crossed another threshold of horror and of scorn for the most basic standards and elementary principles of humanity, which, as we have seen, it has continued to flout. France has always said, not as an ideological statement but because the evidence tells us so, that the Middle East will never have peace and security as long as a regime exists that is guilty of committing war crimes, indeed crimes against humanity, in order to maintain its hold on power. That regime slaughters its own population on the pretext of fighting terrorism, while continuing to fan the flames of Da'esh.

After the attack on 4 April, a military installation of the Syrian regime that had been used for chemical bombardments was destroyed by United States air strikes. The American operation was a legitimate response to a mass crime that could not go unpunished. Bashar Al-Assad, as we have reiterated on many occasions, bears full responsibility for this development.

Russia's veto on 28 February (see S/PV.7893) of a draft resolution (S/2017/172) aimed at punishing those responsible for the chemical attacks committed several years ago already represented a dangerous indication of looming impunity. The massacre in Khan Shaykhoun should have acted as a wake-up call to all of us about our responsibilities. How can those who claim to be committed to the non-proliferation regime and the fight against impunity reject the evidence before them? How is it possible to repeatedly and in such a systematic manner evade the issue of the barbaric use of weapons of mass destruction targeting innocent people? Nothing can justify averting one's eyes from such atrocities, or dissembling, or attempting to assign blame elsewhere and trying to impose counter-narratives on the world.

France will not resign itself to the notion of the Council's impotence that some seek to impose on it. We will lend our full support to the work of United Nations and OPCW mechanisms, including in their efforts to shed light on the circumstances of the attack. We must also fully support the OPCW team responsible for the inquiry into the initial Syrian declaration. Our goal will continue to be the dismantling of the Syrian chemical-weapons programme.

France will not accept impunity for those responsible for the atrocities committed in Syria. We will spare no effort to ensure that sooner or later the perpetrators answer for their crimes. France will also work to strengthen the non-proliferation regime, which is vital for our collective security and which the Council has to date always sought to uphold.

The initiative undertaken by France, along with Mexico, on limiting the use of the veto in the case of mass atrocities is aimed at precisely situations of this kind. It is now clearly more topical than ever and reflective of our concerns.

This tragedy is yet another reminder of the fact that only a genuine political transition will allow us to guarantee peace and security for the Syrian people and a return to stability in the Middle East. We cannot wait for other crimes to be added to the long list of abuses committed by the Syrian regime, which no one, not even its closest supporters, can justify any longer.

We cannot simply give up. We owe it to the victims of this heinous chemical attack, and, more broadly speaking, to all of the victims of the Syrian tragedy. In that context, despite the fact that the veto was wielded once again today, France solemnly calls on all the members of the Security Council to come together and set aside political divisions and national interests in order to establish once again a complete ban on chemical weapons and to help bring about, on an urgent basis, a political transition in Syria, in line with resolution 2254 (2015) and the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex).

Let us live up to our responsibilities before the judgment of history.

**Mr. Aboulatta** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Egypt supported the draft resolution (S/2017/315) submitted by the United Kingdom, France and the United States owing to our interest in the Security Council carrying out its responsibilities with regard to the crimes committed against the Syrian people, particularly given the fact that our Syrian brethren have suffered chemical attacks more than once. I reiterate that we cannot accept any impunity for such crimes.

We have supported, and will continue to support, the principle of accountability for everyone proven to have perpetrated such inhuman acts, regardless of motivation. The Council must undertake all agreed procedures aimed at determining the truth on the basis of evidence and implement the relevant resolutions. Accordingly, we express our extreme dismay at the fact that we were not able to adopt the draft resolution and thus have failed to send a message on the imperative of determining what really happened in Khan Shaykhoun.

However, I would also like to reiterate that the failure to adopt the draft must not affect in any way the objectives of the inquiry mission, on the basis of the clear mandates contained in Council resolutions. Here I call on all international, regional and Syrian parties to cooperate fully with both international mechanisms, in keeping with resolutions 2235 (2015) and 2298 (2016), in order to achieve justice. This is the least we can do for the Syrian people in the context of an issue that has deeply polarized the Council.

**Mr. Cardi** (Italy): Italy had hoped that the unity of the Council would be preserved in ensuring swift action following the latest horrors in the Syrian conflict.

As an elected member of the Security Council, we feel a special responsibility to live up to the expectations of the United Nations membership, which has entrusted us with helping to maintain international peace and security, a responsibility that today we were not able to uphold.

We voted in favour of the draft resolution (S/2017/315) in order to reiterate, first, our condemnation in the strongest terms of any use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances, and, secondly, our support for a full-fledged investigation into the facts in Khan Shaykhoun by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Fact-finding Mission and, as applicable, by the United Nations-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism. We call upon the Syrian Government and all parties in Syria to cooperate fully with the OPCW and the United Nations so as to allow for the prompt conclusion of its investigation into this heinous incident.

Thirdly, there is a need to fight impunity. So long as no one is held accountable and faces tangible consequences for war crimes and crimes against humanity, the incentive will remain to continue to commit them.

We will do our best to ensure that even in the absence of a specific Security Council resolution, the mechanisms in place work to clarify the facts and responsibilities relating to the Khan Shaykhoun attack as soon as possible.

It is deeply disturbing that international humanitarian law and the international non-proliferation architecture continue to be blatantly violated. Upholding respect for these norms, including resolution 2118 (2013), and the Chemical Weapons Convention, which is the cornerstone of the international non-proliferation regime, should have been a shared priority, one that unifies us instead of dividing us.

The challenges of the Syrian crisis require strong cohesion and cooperation on the part of the international community. There is therefore no alternative to engaging and trying to find common solutions. Italy remains committed to working with the other members of the Council and the other members of the international community in doing so.

As I said this morning, the international community has the duty to stop the horrendous suffering of the Syrian civilian population through a political solution and to bring back peace and hope for the future in that country.

**Mr. Bessho** (Japan): Japan voted in favour of the draft resolution (S/2017/315) proposed by France, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The reported use of chemical weapons in Khan Shaykhoun was an affront to humanity and a blatant violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. Given the gravity of the situation, it is very important for the Council to express its determination to address this issue.

It is truly regrettable that we have witnessed another instance of division in the Council despite the clear need to address the incident. What just happened here does not and must not affect the Council's determination concerning this matter. We must expeditiously determine whether chemical weapons were actually used, identify those who are responsible and hold them accountable. Japan welcomes the opening of the investigation by the Fact-finding Mission to the Syrian Arab Republic of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and urges it to report its conclusion as soon as possible.

The Syrian Government and all parties in Syria have the obligation under resolutions 2118 (2013) and 2235 (2015) to fully cooperate with the OPCW and the United Nations, including the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM). In addressing the continuous allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Syria, Japan believes that it is increasingly important to further improve coordination between the Fact-finding Mission, the JIM and the Council so that the Council can react more swiftly to the alleged use of chemical weapons.

**Mr. Liu Jieyi** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China is deeply concerned by the use of chemical weapons in Syria and firmly opposes the use of chemical weapons by any country, group or individual. China is aware that the Syrian Government has written to the Director General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) requesting that the organization send an investigative mission to Khan Shaykhun and the Shayrat airbase to carry out an investigation. China supports the OPCW and the United Nations conducting a comprehensive, objective and an impartial investigation into the relevant cases so as to arrive at a conclusion on the basis of solid evidence that can stand the test of time and be substantiated by facts, thereby bringing the perpetrators of the attack and other responsible parties to justice.

Preserving unity within the Security Council is of critical importance to any solution within the context of the Syrian question. It has been our long-standing hope that the Security Council would speak as one voice on the chemical weapons issue in Syria. We had been working tirelessly for a draft resolution that would have enjoyed the support of all Council members. China highly commends the elected members of the Council for their hard work in trying to reach consensus among Council members. We deeply regret the failure to reach such a consensus on the draft resolution. The attempt to push through a draft resolution in which serious division still remained among Council members was destined to undermine Council unity and impair efforts to seeking a political solution.

The draft resolution on which we voted contains language that condemns the use of chemical weapons that took place within Syria and calls for an investigation into the relevant instances, which is language that China supports. Nevertheless, some other elements of the text may well have been amended to secure consensus. As such, China abstained in the voting on the draft resolution.

The protracted conflict in Syria has caused massive civilian casualties. A political solution continues to be the only way forward to rid the Syrian people of their suffering. Military means simply do not work but only exacerbate the suffering of the Syrian people. China calls on the relevant parties to stay the course towards a political settlement and uphold the Syrian-owned and Syrian-led principle, support the role of the United Nations as the main channel of mediation, and get behind the efforts undertaken by Special Envoy De Mistura. We must step up all four parallel tracks, namely preserving the ceasefire, seeking a political solution, coordinating counter-terrorism activities and providing humanitarian assistance so as to facilitate the search by all parties for a solution that is acceptable to all through the Geneva talks.

China hopes that the international community will work in concert to play a constructive role in securing a comprehensive, impartial and appropriate solution to the Syrian issue without delay.

**Mr. Safronkov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation voted against the draft resolution (S/2017/315) on the chemical weapons incident in Khan Shaykhun on 4 April. That outcome was predetermined as we have consistently expressed our categorical disagreement with the distorted nature of the document, which, as events and consultations unfolded, did not undergo the slightest change. Russian concerns and priorities were ignored and brushed aside under artificial pretences. The primary problem was the fact that the draft resolution by the troika designated the guilty party prior to an independent and objective investigation. That approach is incompatible with legal standards. Those members were aware of our concerns, but, once again, put their unilateral and consequently doomed draft resolution to the vote. Has it become a national sport to intentionally undermine the unity of the Security Council?

The strike on the Syrian air base, which was undertaken before an international investigation was undertaken, was in violation of international law and lacked the approval of the Security Council. Voting in favour of the Western troika draft resolution would have meant legitimizing those illegal actions, which from the point of view of international law and common sense is absolutely unacceptable. If our partners believe that it is necessary to adopt a generic resolution on chemicals in Syria, then we need to sit down together at the table and seriously agree on a comprehensive document, in which we will naturally include our assessments, backed by facts, on the use of chemical weapons by terrorists. In other words, we need to work on the basis of mutually taking into account each other's interests and concerns.

If the goal of our Western partners in the draft resolution was to react to specific events in Khan Shaykhun, then, instead of adopting a one-sided anti-Syrian bias, it should have aimed at ensuring that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) be able to implement its mandate in conducting an impartial investigation. That is precisely the main difference between the Western and Russian draft resolutions. The troika talks about the investigation in a very unclear manner, through its routine mention and emphasizing the fact that the OPCW Fact-finding Mission to the Syrian Arab Republic will, at its discretion, determine the places that it would like to visit. Incidentally, a big question mark hovers over whether it would like to proceed in that manner.

The Russian document contains a clear mandate to do that and in such a way as to leave one doubt that every available resource and all means were exhausted in preparing its conclusions, and, most importantly, that there was a visit to the site at which the incident occurred. We also insist that the staffing of the mission should be decided based on a broad geographical diversity. The results of the investigation must be trusted.

It is of extreme concern to us that since receiving news of the alleged use of chemical weapons in Khan Shaykhun eight days ago, no concrete steps have been taken to investigate the incident through the relevant international entities. As usual, the OPCW Fact-finding Mission appears to be set up to work in remote mode, without visiting the sites where the incidents occurred. We believe that that amounts to a simulacrum of taking action, which only discredits the OPCW.

After what happened, we are going to have to be much more rigorous in taking a look at what the OPCW and the Fact-Finding Mission do. We are convinced that we need to have a full and immediate investigation.

The possibilities for such an investigation have not been exhausted. In order to have one, however, an international team of highly qualified specialists needs to visit the area of Khan Shaykhun and the Al-Shayrat air base that was struck by missiles as soon as possible. In our view, the goal of the visit to Khan Shaykhun is to determine whether or not chemical weapons were used there and, if so, what were the circumstances and who could bear the responsibility for such use. A visit to the Al-Shayrat air base is also necessary, because that is how we can determine whether or not the toxic substances allegedly used in the bombing of Khan Shaykhun had been previously stored at Al-Shayrat.

We underscore the fact that in line with the Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2118 (2013), all parties in Syria have to provide international inspectors with free and unfettered access to the areas of alleged chemical-weapons incidents. Damascus has displayed, in its position statement on that point, openness and readiness to cooperate. On 11 April, the Syrian authorities approached the Director-General of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW, Mr. Üzümcü, with an official request to send a mission to Khan Shaykhun and Al-Shayrat. We need to make use of that proposal by the Syrian authorities, instead of doing what we did after the chemical-weapons attacks in eastern Ghouta and Khan al-Asal, when people ended up being afraid to carry out an investigation. There were all sort of provocations there, and we almost got to the point where some permanent members of the Security Council were on the verge of armed attacks on Syrian territory. Fortunately, reason prevailed.

Like the Syrian authorities, the general coordinator of the opposition's High Negotiations Committee, Mr. Hijab, sent a letter to the United Nations with a request to initiate an investigation at Khan Shaykhun and said that he stood ready to help in the investigation, which, for us, means providing safe access to the site of the alleged chemical incident. In other words, we have ended up with a very unusual situation where both the Government officials in Damascus and the opposition together are asking for an independent investigation, while the OPCW is doing nothing, for reasons unknown.

But if we are to talk professionally, then, in order to carry out an investigation by competent international authorities of what took place in Khan Shaykhun, and by that we mean first and foremost the OPCW, there is no need for a new Security Council resolution, and that is something that was being said during the past week by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, except that he was putting a different spin on those words. It turns out that for him a resolution was necessary in order to predetermine the outcome of the investigation. We should not forget the fact that our country was present at the inception of a unique, unprecedented process of the chemical demilitarization of Syria, which — and this has been acknowledged by authoritative international organizations — was carried out successfully.

However, some capitals still have an anti-Syrian-regime slant. We are left with the very clear impression that in actual fact the authors of the draft resolution do not want to work with the people whom they have sponsored and who feel very much at ease in Idlib province. They do not want to fulfil their responsibility to make sure that international specialists have free and safe access. Once again, let me repeat, they are afraid of an impartial investigation that could show that there is a developed system for manipulating chemical weapons. We have every reason to believe that after Khan Shaykhun other provocations by extremists using toxic substances could follow.

We once again emphasize that collective efforts today should be aimed at supporting the peace process using the Astana and Geneva platforms to strengthen the ceasefire regime and jointly combat terrorism, using a single standard. One of the first steps here should be the launching of an impartial, unbiased and truly independent investigation of the tragedy in Khan Shaykhun, which necessarily includes travelling to the place of the incident. Remote investigations must no longer be used. We are looking forward to the specific decisions that will be issued on that matter on 13 April, namely, at the meeting of the Executive Council of the OPCW on that date.

Once again I would like to ask speakers not to insult and offend Russia in their statements. We have to remain within some bounds of courtesy.

**Mr. Alemu** (Ethiopia): There are two points that we have regularly stressed since we joined the Security Council in connection with actions taken by the Security Council on chemical-weapons matters.

The first is the unity of the Council. The rationale for that is that the alternative, namely, division within the Security Council, is counterproductive in any effort to ensure the cessation of the use of chemical weapons. It is also inimical to the peace process.

Secondly, a major step was taken only a few weeks ago in terms of removing chemical weapons from Syria. That was a major achievement, which should serve as an example regardless of any doubts now with respect to how effectively it has been implemented. That is why it is unfortunate and regrettable that the Council today was unable to respond to the report of the use of chemical weapons in Idlib on 4 April 2017.

We do not really believe that it would have been that hard to reach consensus on a draft resolution, because what the resolution was supposed do was to call for was a thorough investigation to ensure accountability based on the results of an independent, professional and impartial process. There was certainly a possibility for us to reach the necessary compromise on the sticking issue that many of us had concerns about. What could have easily resolved the issue was to turn to already agreed language from previous resolutions. That language is strong enough to convey the message and ensure that the objective is achieved, namely, to hold those responsible to account. We tried, as the 10 elected members of the Council, to work towards that end. We thank China for its readiness to look at the positive aspects of that effort.

All parties undoubtedly have an obligation to cooperate with the Fact-Finding Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which was stated very clearly in the past. It would have been easier to resort to the language that I referred to earlier to achieve the necessary consensus, because no one in the Council opposes the main thrust of the draft resolution calling for an investigation. That is what the wider membership of the United Nations and the rest of the world expected from the Security Council today. They are, no doubt, very sad that we have not been able to send the right message.

As we stated clearly last week, we were certainly inclined to look at the draft resolution favourably, because it simply requests that an investigation into an incident that potentially constitutes a grave violation of international law take place. Our hope and expectation was that the paragraph in the draft resolution that caused us and other Council members some concern would be handled through consultations. It is really unfortunate that the Council was not able to reach consensus and lost the opportunity to send a powerful and unified message to the world about the use of chemical weapons, which represent an affront to all humankind.

**Mr. Skoog** (Sweden): Sweden has repeatedly expressed its outrage over the abhorrent and unacceptable, reported chemical attacks in Khan Shaykhun. The use of chemical weapons is not only a clear violation of international law, but also a threat to international peace and security. We, as members of the Security Council, have a responsibility to take action in response. That should not be a polarizing issue. It is a core duty of the Security Council.

As an elected member, Sweden has worked tirelessly in order to ensure the urgent adoption of a strong resolution that would condemn the reported attack, support a prompt and thorough investigation and hold those responsible to account. All efforts to that end were exhausted over the past few days. The Council had the chance to speak with one voice against the illegal use of chemical weapons. Unity in the Council would have strengthened the hand of the ongoing investigations and sent a clear message about this Council's rejection of chemical weapons. We are therefore deeply disappointed that it was not possible to find such unity on an issue where there should be common ground. We regret that the draft resolution was not adopted because of a Russian veto. The Council must come together so that those responsible for this horrendous attack will be held to account. We will continue our efforts in that regard.

We trust that the mechanisms in place will ensure a rapid, full and impartial investigation to establish all facts. We urge all parties and especially the Government of Syria to cooperate fully in accordance with resolution 2118 (2013). When the reports by the Fact-finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism on the attack in Khan Shaykhun are available, this Council must act unitedly upon those findings.

As was discussed this morning, we must, now more than ever, intensify our efforts to reinvigorate the political process led by the United Nations, revitalise the ceasefire and ensure humanitarian access. The only way to end the suffering in Syria is through a transitional political process in line with resolution 2254 (2015).

**Mr. Llorenty Solíz** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): To begin, Bolivia would like to reiterate its robust condemnation in the strongest possible terms of the use of chemical weapons. Such acts are unjustified and criminal at all times, irrespective of the pretext for the use of chemical weapons, whomever the victims may be or wherever such an attack takes place.

Bolivia would also like to underscore the pressing need for an independent, impartial, thorough and conclusive investigation to take place into the events that took place a few days ago in Syria. Bolivia voted against the draft resolution because it believes that the Security Council should not be used as a sounding board for the propaganda for war or interventionism. It should not be used as a pawn to be sacrificed in the chess game of war. The draft resolution submitted today was the result of negotiations from which some members were unfortunately excluded. We would like to draw attention to the fact that draft resolutions that are not supported by consensus are being introduced. We already know in advance that they will be vetoed by permanent members of the Security Council. What is the point of such exercises?

These draft resolutions seem to be used as an instrument to influence the discussions that are taking place between Russia and the United States in Moscow. Is that perhaps the pretext for what happened today? Is the Security Council being used as a pawn for such purposes? Are those who put forward such proposals really doing so for the benefit of the Syrian people or are they doing so for their own political or military reasons? We believe that it is a contradiction to submit to the Security Council draft resolutions — making use of multilateral tools — after unilateral steps have already been taken.

Bolivia will make itself fully available to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and support its efforts as it pursues its required investigation. We once again call for unity in the Council. It is not just about supporting the peace process in Syria and guaranteeing humanitarian access so that aid can reach all victims of the terrible conflict raging in the country. We also have to uphold unity in order to fulfill our responsibility as outlined in the Charter of the United Nations and by the international community.

**Mr. Umarov** (Kazakhstan): We are confident that there is no solution to the question of Syria besides a political one. We should all make every possible effort to ensure that we reach it. My country is deeply concerned about and strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons, which occurred in Idlib province earlier in April. All interested parties, including the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, should ensure secure and unimpeded access for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism so that it can carry out its investigation in a professional, objective and fair manner, as outlined in its mandate in resolution 2235 (2015).

We strongly believe that the Security Council, as the single organ entrusted with maintaining international peace and security, should preserve its unity at such a critical stage. Elected members of the Security Council worked hard to find a middle ground and ensure a united, efficient approach to the issue. We express our readiness to work further with Council members on the compromised text. The world does not want to see tensions and ineffectiveness characterize the Council. Rather, it wants to see a unified and tangible approach to carry forward the Astana and Geneva processes, all in the interest of the Syrian people.

Finally, we call on all parties to exert greater political will and unite through dialogue and compromise in order to find a political solution to the crisis in Syria.

**Mr. Seck** (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to reiterate once more that nothing can justify the atrocity that is the use of chemical weapons. We are party to the Chemical Weapons Convention. Senegal reiterates its condemnation of the use of chemical weapons on 4 April in Khan Shaykhun in Idlib province. That is why my delegation naturally supported the draft resolution submitted today by the United States, France and the United Kingdom, seeking to uncover the truth about the attack on a transparent, unbiased and impartial basis.

Members of the Security Council and the Secretary-General requested the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, through its Fact-finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic, to pursue its efforts to professionally pool and analyse the information coming in in order to assign responsibility for the use of chemical weapons and enable the Council to take necessary measures. In addition to shedding light on what happened on 4 April in the Idlib province, we call for the spirit of consensus that prevailed when we discussed resolutions 2118 (2013) and 2235 (2015), which represent progress in the area of chemical weapons in Syria. I would like to underscore the need to find a political solution to the crisis on the basis of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and resolution 2254 (2016), which can promote a positive outcome to the crisis.

**Mr. Rosselli** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): There is a cliché that says that the first victim in war is the truth. Although that applies to wars of any kind, it is particularly true of this war. We have States and non-State actors participating. Some States seem to have been invited to participate, while other States seem not to have been invited but consider that they have every right to interfere. There are terrorists, both blatant and disguised. There are dozens of armed groups that supposedly stand for something. Some claim to have religious affiliation. That, of course, complicates everything, because if in a war somebody thinks that God is on their side, then it is difficult to persuade them to lay down their arms without being considered an apostate or a traitor. In the twenty-first century there still seem to be people that believe that God is to be found wielding the barrel of a gun.

We voted in favour of the draft resolution because, on the one hand, we firmly condemn the continued use of chemical weapons in Syria. Secondly, the draft made explicit the information required to conduct a broad-ranging, thorough and independent investigation.

We need to find the truth. A group of members of the Council sought, throughout last week and in the beginning of this week, to try to find a balance between the different positions around this table, in order to enable a broad and thorough investigation that would bring us closer to the truth. Unfortunately, events have come together in such a way as to prevent that from happening, and once again the Security Council has embarked on a process that resembles the novel of García Márquez, "Chronicle of a Death Foretold".

The privileges that distinguish the various Council members calls to mind an expression from the novel of George Orwell, "Animal Farm", namely, that some animals are more equal than others. That legal, but dishonest, imbalance means that many members are in a situation where they have to choose the lesser of two evils in terms of the options before them.

We would like to reiterate our position and the position of the 121 signatories to the Code of Conduct, according to which those members in possession of the right of veto must refrain from the use of such veto when faced with war crimes, which the recent attack in Khan Shaykhun clearly is.

**Mr. Yelchenko** (Ukraine): Following the horrible chemical weapons attack in Idlib in Syria on 4 April, we have all had several opportunities to express our national positions on the matter. Today, Ukraine voted in favour of the draft resolution condemning that heinous crime and demanding its immediate and thorough investigation. Any use of chemical weapons is a flagrant violation of international law and a war crime. The Security Council should therefore act swiftly and resolutely in response to the continuous massive attacks, thus preventing further attempts to commit such abhorrent crimes, as well as eradicating the chemical threat in the region. That has not happened, and today I feel ashamed, because this body has failed to do its job. It failed again today as images of dying children lay in front of us, and at a time when the world expects the Security Council to act in the aftermath of a horrible crime. The vote was a test of the Council's credibility, and we did not pass. What we have just heard from the Russian delegation epitomizes that failure and is symbolic of the Council's inability to do the right thing, even in cases of the most outrageous international crimes. The Council's continued inability to address chemical attacks in Syria is leading to further impunity and sending a signal to perpetrators that they can get away with murder. We deeply regret that today the Council missed yet another chance to fulfil its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations.

Despite the voting results, I commend the efforts of those delegations that were involved in preparing the draft resolution, which sought a comprehensive and thorough investigation of that tragedy. We appreciate the fact that a firm stance in defending and restoring respect for justice and international law won the support of the majority of Council members, notwithstanding the attempts of some delegations to distort the facts.

**The President**: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United States.

Abdel Hamid Al-Youssef put his nine-month-old twin babies in the ground last week. Each branch of Abdel's extended family reportedly got its own trench to bury their dead. One family, 22 victims. Abdel held his twins in his arms. He tried to keep himself together. He tried to stop his tears. All Abdel could say before putting his twins in their final resting place was "say goodbye baby, say goodbye". They were two of the smallest victims of the Assad regime's vicious and barbaric chemical attack.

No one anywhere in the world should ever have to face that kind of suffering. That is why the United States of America, the United Kingdom and France put forward today's draft resolution. It was a step toward holding the perpetrators of that chemical attack accountable, and I thank those members who supported that effort. But, with its veto, Russia said "no" to accountability. Russia said "no" to cooperation with the United Nations independent investigation, and Russia said "no" to a draft resolution that would have helped to promote peace in Syria. Russia once again has chosen to side with Assad, even as the rest of the world — including the Arab world — has overwhelmingly come together to condemn that murderous regime.

Russia said that the draft resolution was biased and that the Assad regime was not involved. The draft resolution simply emphasized the information that the regime is already required to provide to investigators. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism has told us many times that Assad has not provided the access needed to investigate. We need to continue to support the Mechanism's role in further investigating what happened on 4 April. If the regime is innocent, as Russia claims, the information requested by the draft resolution would have vindicated them. Unfortunately, this was Russia's eighth veto on the Syrian resolution. The United States takes no pleasure in seeing Russia isolated again in the Security Council. We want to work with Russia to advance a political process for Syria. We want Russia to use its influence over the Assad regime to stop the madness and the cruelty that we see every day on the ground.

Today's vote could have been a turning point. Once more, today's voting could have served as the moment when Russia saw that its interests do not lie with a murderous dictator, but rather with the many countries in the international community, including those all across the Middle East, that want to end the conflict.

By its failure, Russia will continue to be isolated. We urge Russia to join forces with the overwhelming number of countries that are pushing for a political solution. The international community has spoken. Russia now has a lot to prove.

To Assad and the Syrian Government, I say that they have no friends in the world after their horrible actions. The United States is watching their actions very closely. The days of their arrogance and disregard of humanity are over. Their excuses will no longer be heard. I suggest that they look at today's vote very carefully and heed our warning.

I now resume my functions as the President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic

**Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country condemns and rejects in the strongest terms any use of chemical weapons and any other type of weapon of mass destruction as a crime against humanity that is to be reviled, immoral and unjustifiable in any circumstance. The target for such weapons is the Syrian people, who are still the primary victims of the crimes of armed terrorist groups that did not hesitate to use chemical weapons against them. Let me stress to the Security Council that my country is as eager as ever to uncover the real criminal responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

On the basis of these firm principles, my country's Government acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), implemented all its commitments under the Convention, and has made an achievement unprecedented in the history of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) by ending the Syrian chemical weapons programme in record time and irreversibly, as certified by the statement of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism that was presented to the Security Council in June 2014.

As I told the Council this morning (see S/PV.7921), in the context of its ongoing transparent cooperation with the OPCW, my country sent a letter yesterday to the Director General of the organization, calling on him to send a neutral, fair and professional mission to Khan Shaykhun and the Shayrat air base to find out the truth of what occurred — comprehensively, transparently and fairly. My country, Syria, stresses its readiness to ensure the mission's safe access to Shayrat air base in order to ascertain whether sarin had been or is stockpiled there.

As for the town of Khan Shaykhun, regrettably I am forced to tell the Council that access to that town must be guaranteed by the terrorist group Jabhat al-Nusra and its associate terrorist organizations operating there, via the Governments of States that support, guide and direct that organization on the ground, foremost among which are France, Britain, the United States, Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Israel.

My country is the primary stakeholder in uncovering the truth. In principle, we support any action of the Security Council to attain such truth. However, we object to draft resolutions containing sly political language, prejudging the results of any investigation and leaning towards leading the investigation to indict the Syrian Government a priori, as did my colleagues the representatives of the Britain and France earlier here. The three Western States on the Council have become used to incorporating similar language in previous draft resolutions, leading to their misues later on by those States to justify intervention in the internal affairs of other States and military aggression against them, as was the case in Libya and other countries.

Whoever reads today's draft resolution (S/2017/315) carefully will see that its true objective is not to uncover the truth but to absolutely violate Syrian sovereignty and exploit any information that could have been collected through the draft resolution, had it been adopted, in order to help armed terrorist groups supported by the three States and their proxies in the region to target the personnel, sites and capacities of the Syrian Government and army, under the pretext of looking for the "chemical Godot", as was the case in Iraq.

If the sponsors of today's draft resolution do not see any benefit in the mechanisms available at the OPCW., why do they not introduce another draft resolution to end the work of the OPCW? They might, for instance, clear out its archives and keep them in steel boxes that will not be opened for 60 years, just as they did with the archives of the inspection committees seeking weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. My country did not use atomic weapons against Hiroshima and Nagaski. My country did not use chemical and biological weapons against Viet Nam. My country did not use enriched uranium against Iraq. My country did not test atomic weapons against Algerians, alive, in the Algerian Sahara.

On 31 March, in our talks in Geneva, I provided Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura with early and documented reports about the possession by armed terrorist groupss in rural Damascus, Idlib and Hama of toxic chemical materials to be used as weapons against civilians. I also warned him that the facts were falsified and that the evidence and accusations were fabricated against the Syrian Government, as on previous occasions. I related this information to Mr. De Mistura five days before the incident in Khan Shaykhun. As I said this morning, my country's Government has addressed more than 90 letters, the latest only one day ago, to the various relevant United Nations bodies, including documented information on the possession by terrorist organizations, led by Da'esh and Jabhat Al-Nusra, of toxic chemical materitals, including sarin, which they obtained from Libya through Turkish territory, with the full knowledge of the Turkish authorities.

The sponsors of today's draft resolution know full well that, since my country acceded to the CWC, the resolutions of the Security Council and the OPCW have been the sufficient and appropriate international legal framework in that regard. I call on the rest of the States members of the Security Council to use logical and rational trial, seek clear and genuine responses to the questions raised by this painful incident and by the reactions of the United States, Britain and France. Let us try to answer the following questions.

Why did the videos and photographs of the Khan Shaykhun incident come only from organizations claiming to work in the humanitarian field, whereas they are directly linked to armed terrorist groups on the ground. I refer here specifically to a group called the White Helmets, which seems to have won an Oscar for Best Actor. We have repeatedly provided the Security Council with pictures, films and documented evidence that members of that organization work under the direction of the British intelligence services and are funded by the United States and Britain. That is the first question.

The second question is: Has anyone read the report issued by the organization Swedish Doctors for Human Rights, exposing the duplicity of the so-called White Helmets?

The third question is: Is anyone here aware that the British doctor of Pakistani decent, Shajul Islam, who was with the armed terrorist groups on the ground in Khan Shaykhun and was the main witness in all the provocative media campaigns against the Syrian Government, was imprisoned for 13 months in the Britain, charged with terrorist acts, including the kidnapping of British journalists in Syria? A terrorist criminal becomes an eye witness, and this fabricated media campaign is based on his testimony.

Furthermore, how can anyone who pretends to seek the truth through international legitimacy assume the right to perpetrate an act of military aggression against a site that they claim to have been the origin of aircraft that flew off to strike Khan Shaykhun with chemical weapons?

I urge Council members to read the book entitled *The REAL Benghazi Story: What the White House and Hillary Don't Want You to Know,* by Aaron Klein, which details the coordination and mediation role undertaken by the late United States Ambassador to Libya, Chris Stevens, in operations to export weapons and sarin from Libya to the States sponsors of terrorism in Syria, first and foremost Turkey. I also invite them to read a scientific report published by Theodore Postol, an American professor working at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. It evaluates the White House claims of the alleged events in Khan Shaykhun. He believes that the information on which United States officials based their allegations against the Syrian Government points merely to a crater in a road north of Khan Shaykhun. He concludes that these data seem more consistent with the possibility that the munitions were on the ground and notdropped from the air.

What does my colleague, the representative of France, call the killing by French aircraft of 200 civilians in the village of Toukhan Al-Kubra in rule Aleppo, on 19 July 2016? And what does my colleague, the representative of the United States, call the killing by American aircraft of 237 civilians in the town of Al-Mansura, after they had fled Da'esh in the Raqqa region.My delegation stresses that it is continuing to implement all its commitments under the CWC and to wage our war on terror, which will not stop regardless of any political blackmail, media campaigns or shedding of innocent blood.

In conclusion, my delegation thanks and expresses its appreciation to the Russian Federation and Bolivia for voting against the draft resolution today, as well as those delegations that abstained in the voting, in their conviction of the sinister objectives behind the draft resolution, the most basic principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and their belief that such texts affect the credibility of international action and institutions and threaten international peace and security.

*The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.*

United Nations

S/PV.7923

# Security Council

Seventy-second year

*Provisional*

## 7923rd meeting

Wednesday, 12 April 2017, 4.35 p.m.
New York

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|---|---|---|
| *President*: | Ms Sison | (United States of America) |
| *Members*: | Bolivia (Plurinational State of) | Mr. Llorentty Solíz |
| | China | Mr. Wu Haitao |
| | Egypt | Mr. Aboulatta |
| | Ethiopia | Mr. Alemu |
| | France | Mr. Delattre |
| | Italy | Mr. Lambertini |
| | Japan | Mr. Kawamura |
| | Kazakhstan | Mr. Temenov |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Iliichev |
| | Senegal | Mr. Ciss |
| | Sweden | Mr. Skoog |
| | Ukraine | Mr. Fesko |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Mr. Wilson |
| | Uruguay | Mr. Bermúdez |

**Agenda**

The situation in the Great Lakes region

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (S/2017/208)

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*The meeting was called to order at 4.35 p.m.*

## Adoption of the agenda

*The agenda was adopted.*

## The situation in the Great Lakes region

### Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (S/2017/208)

**The President**: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Said Djinnit, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/208, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

I now give the floor to Mr. Djinnit.

**Mr. Djinnit**: I would like to thank the Security Council for the opportunity to brief it on the progress on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, and on the challenges to it.

I would like to begin by highlighting some of the progress that has been made in implementing the Framework during the period under review. On 26 October, as a result of the successful reform of the governing structures of the Framework initiated by my Office with the support of the other guarantors, Angola hosted the seventh Summit of the Regional Oversight Mechanism in Luanda, the first meeting of the Mechanism to take place in a signatory country since the Framework agreement was signed four years ago. The Summit generated renewed ownership and commitment by the leaders of the region to the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. I am pleased to report that other countries, including the Republic of the Congo and Uganda have offered to host future summits of the Regional Oversight Mechanism.

The persistent activities of the illegal armed groups remain one of the main threats to the security of the populations and to the stability of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region. We should therefore continue to beef up efforts aimed at neutralizing the illegal armed groups, including the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and others, building on the progress made so far by the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the support of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). In that regard, it is important to further strengthen the cooperation between the two forces. It is equally important, as stressed in resolution 2348 (2017), that the Force Intervention Brigade, with the support of MONUSCO as a whole, enhance its offensive operations targeting the armed groups.

I welcome the launching on 18 February by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda of the Joint Follow-up Mechanism to address the growing threat posed by the ADF. I call on the participating countries to contribute actively to that Mechanism and provide it with the necessary resources to allow it to effectively perform its mission. Against that background, the recent incursion into the Democratic Republic of the Congo by the elements of the former Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) rebel group, previously cantoned in Uganda, was a setback to the commendable efforts deployed by the leaders of the region to address that recurrent problem in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, through the signing of the famous Nairobi Declarations in 2013.

Following that incident, I engaged together with Special Representative of the Secretary-General Sidikou and authorities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda to encourage an early resumption of the joint consultations, which we facilitated last year — as the United Nations, together with the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework — between Government officials and ex-M-23 representatives on the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations. We shall pursue those efforts.

We have also been assisting the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan to address the issue of the presence of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition elements in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Similarly, we will continue to work closely with the other guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, the countries of the region and partners to tackle the daunting challenge of the repatriation of disarmed foreign combatants in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and neighbouring countries.

Although relations between countries of the region have been affected by the activities of illegal armed groups, which have generated suspicion and mistrust, the reporting period witnessed promising steps towards the strengthening of economic cooperation. I encourage the signatory countries of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework to continue to engage in joint development projects that contribute to further enhancing regional integration and stability.

During the reporting period, my office, together with country teams and the other United Nations entities in the region, has continued to support efforts to address the root causes of conflict in the region, in line with that mandate. In addition to ongoing efforts to support the empowerment of women in the region, we are currently promoting initiatives on displacement, illicit exploitation of natural resources, youth unemployment and fighting impunity, jointly with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and other partners.

(*spoke in French*)

I have continued to support the inter-Burundian dialogue by being in direct contact with the Facilitator, Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, and by encouraging increased commitment from leaders in the region. In that regard, the next summit of the Community of East African States will certainly provide an opportunity for Heads of State in the region to reiterate their support for the Facilitator's efforts and to show greater commitment to Burundian stakeholders in the quest for a consensus-based solution to the issues the country faces. In close collaboration with my colleague, Mr. Maman Sidikou, I will also continue to encourage inter-Congolese dialogue, which was facilitated by the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo (CENCO) and led to the signing of the comprehensive and inclusive political agreement on 31 December 2016 and to the subsequent negotiations on the specific arrangements.

I take this opportunity to commend CENCO's laudable work. When it concluded its mediation on 27 March, CENCO called for the personal involvement of and accountability from the Head of State, as the nation's guarantor of the swift implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement. Since then, President Joseph Kabila has appointed a Prime Minister. That appointment was met with opposition from the Rassemblement des forces politiques et sociales de la République démocratique du Congo acquises au changement, headed by the late Étienne Tshisekedi and Pierre Lumbi.

I call on the parties to strictly implement the 31 December 2016 agreement, in order to create the conditions for the holding of transparent, inclusive and peaceful elections, through dialogue and an ongoing quest for consensus. I implore them to refrain from engaging in any action that could spark violence. I reiterate the United Nations readiness to support and assist the Congolese parties in implementing the 31 December 2016 agreement, in accordance with resolution 2348 (2017). In that regard, it is important for the United Nations, the African Union, the Southern African Development Community and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, as guarantor of the framework agreement to continue to work closely and coordinate their actions to facilitate the implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement.

I would like to recall that, apart from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, Kenya and Rwanda will also hold elections in the coming months. I encourage all stakeholders in those countries to create conditions that are conducive to the holding of transparent, inclusive and peaceful elections.

(*spoke in English*)

In conclusion, I wish to commend the leaders and the people of the Great Lakes region for their monumental achievements in overcoming the tragedies and conflicts of the past and for charting the way forward towards shared peace and prosperity. I encourage them to pursue their efforts through decisive steps to address the outstanding issue of the illegal armed groups. I also encourage the leaders of the region to remain committed to assisting Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan to address the persistent crisis in those countries. In their efforts, the countries of the region can count on the continued support of the United

Nations, working closely with the African Union and subregional organizations.

**The President**: I thank Mr. Djinnit for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the members of the Security Council who wish to make statements.

**Mr. Delattre** (France) (*spoke in French*): First, I would like to warmly thank Mr. Djinnit for his excellent work and unwavering commitment to achieving peace in the Great Lakes region. I am pleased that we have been given the opportunity to speak with him in this format, where we can take a step back and consider all of the region's challenges. The regional dimension of the crisis in the Great Lakes region should not be neglected.

France is concerned about three main mutually reinforcing issues in the region: the continued slow process of implementing of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, the ongoing political crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the situation in Burundi, both of which can significantly destabilize the region if they are not resolved. The Security Council must take joint, decisive action thereon in order to prevent a regional crisis from erupting.

Turning first to the Addis Ababa Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, I would note that despite some headway, as underscored by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2017/208), which was presented by Mr. Djinnit, negative forces continue to make their presence felt in the region. Although the era of reciprocal destabilization by armed groups is, fortunately, over, the legacy of that time remains, and certain armed groups are still active. This legacy of the past continues to fuel suspicion and mistrust between the countries of the region; it must be definitely resolved so that the region can finally move forward and forge healthy ties of cooperation. To that end, decisive steps will need to be taken in three areas, and regional organizations, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), have a key role to play in this respect.

First, with respect to a military response to the armed groups, a key role will be played by the Force Intervention Brigade, provided by SADC. The renewed mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) will enable it to rebuild its capacity for mobility in order for it to engage in decisive offensive actions, as it did with respect to the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23).

Secondly, political action must be taken in order to demobilize, repatriate and reintegrate these combatants in their countries of origin. Here I am thinking of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and former members of M23, as well as those of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition, who have been in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since last year. This will require joint action and a commitment at the highest level of the political leaders concerned.

The Addis Ababa agreement, which experienced a welcome revitalization thanks to the efforts of Angola in 2016, must be fully implemented, and the Technical Support Committee of the Regional Oversight Mechanism must undertake this task. Its upcoming meeting in Brazzaville in October will be an opportunity to address the issue.

Thirdly, I turn to the issue of tackling the illicit trafficking in natural resources. Armed groups use such traffic to meet their needs, contribute to their survival and fuel an economy of war and predation. So long as that illicit trafficking continues, no lasting solution to the instability in the region is possible. Therefore there needs to be strong, harmonized action by the countries of the region as well as a sustained commitment of international partners to ensure that we can stamp out illicit trafficking in natural resources with the support of the international community. We must work for transparency in the mining industry and ensure greater traceability of minerals.

Turning to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, France is very concerned. At the political level, the failure to implement the 31 December 2016 agreement threatens any potential resolution of the crisis. All of the legislative bodies in the country have now overrun their mandates, and therefore their legitimacy going forward depends entirely on the 31 December 2016 agreement and the consensus that characterized its signing. The appointment of a Prime Minister who does not enjoy consensus support following a process that does not respect the provisions of the 31 December 2016 agreement is a very worrying step. The agreement is the only credible road map for an end to the crisis, and its violation could seriously threaten the stability and the future of the country.

In keeping with resolution 2348 (2017), which was just adopted by the Security Council unanimously, France reaffirms the need for the urgent and unconditional implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement, including the lifting of restrictions on rights and freedoms, so as to enable the holding, in suitable conditions, of elections by the end of 2017, as agreed, thus paving the way for the first peaceful transition of power in the history of the country.

It is crucial that international partners, the Security Council, the African Union and the SADC, all of which welcomed the 31 December 2016 agreement, work to ensure its implementation. France will stand side by side with its partners to achieve that purpose.

The deterioration of the security and human rights situation is also a source of great concern to us. Violence in the Kasai region has soared to levels that we had hoped never again to see in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is therefore pressing that the situation be brought under control. France condemns the acts of violence that we have seen in the region over the last few months and looks forward to the outcome of the joint inquiry of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO into violations and assaults on human rights and humanitarian law in the region.

The cowardly murder of two United Nations experts in that region underscores once again the deterioration of the situation in the area. France calls for full light to be shed on this very tragic event, so that those responsible can be identified and stand trial for their crimes. We once again underscore our full support for the United Nations Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo, whose members play a key role.

Turning finally to the situation in Burundi, here we have to note that, regrettably, there has been no noticeable improvement. As the Secretary-General states in his report,

> "The inter-Burundian dialogue, facilitated by the East African Community, has yet to produce a breakthrough". (*S/2017/208, para. 14*)

Despite the efforts of the Facilitator, Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, which France welcomes, a genuine and authentic commitment to this dialogue is still lacking. Observers from the African Union have not yet been deployed, nor have the police officers specified in resolution 2303 (2016); on the contrary, the situation seems to be getting worse by the day. I think that no one could fail to be shocked by the images of the video that has been circulating in which young members of the Imbonerakure militia call for rape and murder. These images and the hate speech that goes with it conjure up extremely painful memories in the Great Lakes region and is a source of grave concern for France. Such behaviour cannot be tolerated. The leadership of the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie has condemned these acts, and France hopes that appropriate measures will be taken to put a definitive end to such behaviour and that the perpetrators of human rights violations in the country will be prosecuted and sentenced.

Burundi could, with the restoration of peace and security, play a stabilizing role on the continent, as it was able to do in the past by sending peacekeepers to the Central African Republic and Somalia. For that to happen, the resolutions of the Security Council must be implemented and peaceful relationships restored with the United Nations agencies that have been supporting Burundi for 20 years towards a return to peace. The resumption of cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights would be a positive step along these lines.

This will require finding a political solution to the current crisis through inclusive, open and honest dialogue by way of the mediation efforts of the East African Community (EAC) and full respect for the Arusha agreement. Only such a dialogue, strengthened by a firm rejection of violence and by guaranteeing the security and fundamental rights of all Burundians, will can allow Burundi to find its way back to the path of peace and stability.

France hopes that the EAC Summit at the end of April will be the first step in a positive process and that the Government will honestly commit to moving forward.

Our most deeply cherished wish as a close-knit partner of the region and a permanent member of the Security Council is to see Burundi pursue the cause of peace and lasting stability so as to finally benefit from its wealth in natural resources and be able to focus on development and the well-being of people. This will require a strengthening of political stability and the democratic legitimacy of institutions, as well as a fight against impunity. This is not a given, and France is concerned. We hope that political leaders will meet the challenges and put the process back on track. It is the responsibility of the Security Council to support them in this difficult task so as to ensure that years of tremendous investment on the part of the international community are not jeopardized and that the peoples of the region do not suffer as a result.

**Mr. Ciss** (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Said Djinnit, for the update that he has provided in the wake of the report submitted by the Secretary-General in March 2017 (S/2017/208) on the implementation of the framework agreement for Peace, Security and Cooperation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region.

During the past few weeks, the Security Council has devoted several meetings to the countries of the Great Lakes region, including the review of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/206) on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the process for the renewal of the mandate of that Mission pursuant to resolution 2348 (2017), which the Security Council adopted on 31 March. Moreover, the present meeting comes at an opportune time in that it allows us to focus on the regional dynamics, which are essential for the peace and security of the States of the region. In that regard, the Senegalese delegation reiterates its support for the tireless efforts of the Special Envoy, Mr. Said Djinnit, in particular in the areas of preventive diplomacy and the promotion of peace and security in the Great Lakes region.

In the area of security, the ongoing situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo remains a matter of concern, with the resurgence of the Movement of March 23 (M-23), which has been observed during the past months. The resurgence of M-23, once again, underscores the crucial question of the implementation of the Declaration of Commitments by the Movement of March 23, known as the Nairobi Declarations, and therefore poses new challenges to regional cooperation. Such regional cooperation is absolutely necessary to achieving peace, security and sustainable development in the Great Lakes region. It continues to be the only viable mechanism to overcome the decades-long threat posed by armed groups in and beyond the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. For example, such regional cooperation could well provide the appropriate framework for finding a solution to the problem generated by the presence of elements of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo following last July's clashes so as to not further complicate the already fragile security situation of the area. Accordingly, all efforts by the United Nations as well as the countries of the region must contribute to the search for an appropriate solution to that problem.

Furthermore, with regard to security, the spread of outbreaks of community violence beyond eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is a matter of great concern to us. We therefore call for a rapid response to that emerging threat, including through political responses.

One of the most tangible consequences of the regional security situation, which remains fragile, is the large number of refugees and displaced persons representing respectively more than 3.5 million and 6 million individuals in the region. The Senegalese delegation shares the satisfaction expressed by the Secretary-General with regard to the hospitality of the countries and peoples of the region who have welcomed that flow of people with the limited means and resources at their disposal. Those host countries and communities deserve increased support from the international community.

At the political level, we note that instability persists in some countries of the region despite the political processes and dialogue that were initiated and aimed at peacefully resolving crises that, for the most part, are associated with issues pertaining to electoral processes. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage the Special Envoy to pursue his coordination work with the organizations and countries of the region to support the inter-Burundi dialogue facilitated by the Economic Commission for Africa and the ongoing political process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, among others.

In that regard, my delegation would like to call upon the various parties concerned by those political processes to further explore the inexhaustible possibilities for dialogue in a spirit of enhanced mutual trust, respect for human and civil rights and ensuring public order, while, above all, showing a genuine desire for compromise.

Concerning more specifically the implementation of the Framework Agreement, we note with satisfaction the progress made in the establishment of a joint follow-up mechanism to address the threat of the Allied Democratic Forces. The mechanism, it should be recalled, was agreed by the Heads of State of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania on the sidelines of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) in June 2016. The same dynamic should be implemented in connection with repatriating and disarming the combatants of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and M-23, which, according to the report of the Secretary-General, are making limited progress.

It is also necessary to recall that the implementation of the Framework agreement includes a component which concerns the international community, in particular the United Nations. In that regard, we welcome the efforts of the Special Envoy to promote international support for the Framework agreement, as well as the operationalization of the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework 2016-2017, which we endorsed here in March 2016 with the adoption of resolution 2277 (2016).

Finally, the Senegalese delegation would like to speak on behalf of the other countries of the region who believe that the fight against insecurity in the Great Lakes region should proactively take charge of the trafficking and illegal exploitation of natural resources that fuel conflicts and support armed groups. In that regard, we look forward to the holding of a meeting jointly organized by the Executive Secretary of the ICGLR and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on the illegal exploitation and trade in natural resources by armed groups, as was requested by the Defence Ministers for member States of the ICGLR and Southern African Development Community in Nairobi on 20 July 2016 (see S/2016/840).

**Mr. Iliichev** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Said Djinnit, for his briefing on the implementation of the Framework agreement on peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes Region. We believe that it is the cornerstone for ensuring stability in the Great Lakes region. We are in favour of the full implementation of all the commitments by all signatories, including respect for sovereignty, non-interference in other countries' internal affairs and strengthening confidence-building measures among the countries of the subregion.

In that regard, we note the effective interaction between the Congolese leadership and neighbouring countries in the region in August 2016, as well as the beginning of the joint follow-up mechanism [illegible] through the collective efforts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania to counter the Allied Democratic Forces. The positive outcome was the meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism for Peace, Security and Cooperation Agreement, held in Luanda on October 26, that showed that the mechanism exists and acts independently without external support.

We should note that, three years following its signing, the military provisions of the Framework agreement remain far from being implemented. We commend the work of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which remains committed to combating gangs and stabilizing the situation, and welcome the resumed full-scale cooperation, in June 2016, between Kinshasa and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in that area. But the armed groups remain active in the country and in the region, in general, and their activities prolong the ethnic conflicts, provoke the illegal spread of weapons and worsen the humanitarian situation. It is clear that there is no military solution to the conflict. Comprehensive measures are needed to eliminate its underlining causes, including through the strengthening the State authorities in the liberated areas.

We are concerned about the situation with respect to the repatriation of several hundred of ex-combatants from the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) from Uganda, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Of course, the ongoing contacts between the Congolese authorities and the leadership of the M-23 is welcome news, but the lack of progress in this area has already led to repeat offences by the combatants. In this regard, we are naturally concerned by the repeated mutual accusations about supporting combatants and recruiting refugees into their ranks. We think that the sides have to display maximum restraint and avoid an escalation including through using the expanded Joint Verification Mechanism, which is provided for in the Framework agreement.

Another challenge for the Framework agreement is the issue of having the allies of Mr. Riek Machar present on the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Without going to the genesis of the problem, we call upon Mr. Djinnit and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Maman Sidikou to do everything they can to make sure that the relevant provisions of resolution 2348 (2017) are implemented. We know the role played by the Special Envoy in trying to bring private investors into the region and in providing a new dynamic to the economic cooperation among countries in the region, thereby strengthening peace and cooperation there.

A number of country signatories to the Framework agreement are still on the Security Council agenda because of the still-unresolved conflicts. The continuation of these conflicts is fed by social networks via the Internet. We call for putting an end to the rhetoric of hate on the part of members of the opposition and spoilers who have found refuge in Western countries, in particular those from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Belgium and South Sudan in the United States and the United Kingdom. Without this, the provisions we have in resolution 2327 (2016) will make no sense. Africans, should not have to pay with their lives so that the citizens of those countries can enjoy the freedom of expression.

Many countries in the region are at a stage where they are the creating or reforming their democratic institutions. Some of them are in the pre-election period. We welcome the effective mediation efforts and good offices of the United Nations, the African Union and the East African Community, which helped launch a national mechanism for political dialogue in Burundi and helped to bring the negotiating process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to a successful conclusion. At the same time, there is no doubt that political conclusions will lead to lasting stability only if they are arrived at by the members of the political processes themselves. Trying to provide them with recipes or to interpret agreements achieved is unacceptable.

**Mr. Bessho** (Japan): I would like to thank Special Envoy Djinnit for his informative briefing. Against the complex backdrop of the Great Lakes region, his good offices have been invaluable in promoting regional ownership and commitment to revitalizing the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework agreement. The Framework agreement remains essential to achieving sustainable peace and stability in the region. Japan reaffirms its support for Mr. Djinnit's efforts in this regard. Let me underline two major challenges the region faces today.

First, with respect to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we recently renewed the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in order to make it more efficient and focused on key tasks. We are encouraged by the strong commitment of the Southern African Development Community, as reaffirmed in this Chamber by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the United Republic of Tanzania, to continuing to work together with MONUSCO to assist the Democratic Republic of the Congo in achieving sustained peace.

The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is at a critical juncture. The Security Council has been closely following the status of the implementation of the 31 December Political Agreement. Three months have already passed without the establishment of transitional institutions. Japan renews its call on President Kabila Kabange for further leadership and urges all political actors to accelerate the political process. Successful elections are the only viable way to sustain the gains made by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region thus far.

The second challenge is the situation in Burundi. Japan welcomes the recent meeting between President Nkurunziza and the Chair of the Burundi country configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. It is important that this window of dialogue be kept open. However, we remain deeply concerned about the continued suspension of cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of serious human rights violations, especially the climate of impunity surrounding Imbonerakure. We strongly encourage the Government of Burundi to constructively engage with international partners, especially the United Nations, to re-establish cooperative relations based on mutual trust. Japan reiterates that maintaining some level of United Nations presence in Burundi will benefit Burundi itself. In this regard, Japan emphasizes the importance of engagement by the African Union (AU), including through the deployment of AU observers.

I would also like to assure the Council of Japan's full support for the mediation led by the East African Community (EAC) and Mr. Mkapa's facilitation role. We look forward to the forthcoming EAC Summit on 20 April in Dar Es Salaam. We are confident that the heads of State in the subregion will seriously consider the situation in Burundi and provide strong guidance to Mr. Mkapa so that he can lead an inclusive dialogue process.

In closing, I would like to announce that the Japan recently decided to provide $18 million in assistance to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zambia, with particular focus on refugees and food security. Japan will continue to support the people of the Great Lakes region as they seek more peaceful, stable and prosperous lives.

**Mr. Alemu** (Ethiopia): We are very pleased to see our good friend and brother, Ambassador Said Djinnit, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region, among us today. He is our encyclopedia for African politics including those of the Horn. We thank him for his comprehensive briefing on the latest developments in the region and his steadfast efforts aimed at promoting peace, security and stability, in line with the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

We have been discussing the situation in the Great Lakes region in one form or another over the last couple of months when we were dealing with country-specific issues, but today's briefing gives us a comprehensive and holistic picture of the political and security situation in the Great Lakes region. We believe that this is important because the political instability and conflict in some of the countries has a regional dimension, and a concerted regional and international effort is needed to promote peace and stability in the wider region.

In this regard, we take note of the progress made in addressing the challenges that remain, as highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/208). We remain seriously concerned about the deteriorating security situation in the Great Lakes. No doubt the Democratic Republic of the Congo is at the epicentre of the security dynamics in the region, and whatever is happening in the country will have implications for the wider region. That is why we are worried about the activities of armed groups in the eastern part of Democratic Republic of the Congo and the resurgence of negative forces which could undermine regional peace and stability. We appreciate the cooperation between the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the country's national army, and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in response to the activities of these illegal armed groups and negative forces.

We appreciate the efforts being exerted by the Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region to address the issue through consultations with the countries of the region and the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (PSC) for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region . In that connection, we welcome the reform of the structures of governance within the framework of PSC and the renewed commitment of the signatories and guarantors to accelerate its full implementation. Regarding reports of an incursion of ex-M-23 combatants into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we support the call made by the guarantors for all concerned parties to remain committed to the full implementation of the Nairobi Declarations and to refrain from any actions that might jeopardize their implementation.

As far as the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is concerned, we cannot overemphasize the need for the full implementation of the Nairobi Declarations. In the spirit of the political agreement reached on 31 December 2016, the Democratic Republic of the Congo must pave the way for ensuring a successful transition and continued peace and stability in the country. All parties should be called upon to resolve any outstanding issues in the spirit of compromise. They should also be urged to cooperate with mediators of the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo (CENCO), whose role continues to be important in ensuring the implementation of the agreement. It will be very damaging if there is an inclination to set aside the agreement of 31 December and marginalize CENCO.

We also believe that the support of the countries of the region, as well as the African Union and the United Nations, acting in unison and putting their full weight behind the effort, are critical in order to ensure a smooth transition process and ensure that the holding of elections takes place as envisaged in the 31 December agreement. We commend the Special Envoy for continuing to play an important role through his good offices and in close coordination with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic republic of the Congo, Mr. Sidikou, while engaging the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the African Union, as well as regional leaders, in support of the effort.

Regarding Burundi, we understand that the security situation has improved relative to past years. However, we note that allegations of violations of human rights, including forced disappearances and targeted killings, have not ceased. We believe that intra-Burundian dialogue, under the auspices of the East African Community (EAC) mediation effort, remains an important platform for the search for a solution to the political crisis in Burundi. We recognize that there appears to be a veritable stalemate in the peace process. We support the call made by the facilitator for the convening of an extraordinary summit on Burundi in order to stop the political gridlock. We also appreciate the Special Envoy's engagement on the issue, as well as his continued interactions with the facilitator and other regional leaders, aimed at reactivating the intra-Burundian dialogue and encouraging parties to show flexibility and readiness for compromise. We think that there is a need for the EAC, the African Union and the United Nations to coordinate effectively in order to ensure that facilitation is supported in the best way possible.

Finally, the peace and security of the Great Lakes Region is critical. The resolution of the situation has broad implications in that regard. Therefore, the sustained engagement of the Council in supporting ongoing mediation efforts and ensuring the long-term stability of the region will be significant in line with the commitments made within the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

**Mr. Wu Haitao** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to thank the United States for convening this meeting, and the Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Djinnit, for his briefing. China will continue to actively support his work.

The Great Lakes Region lies at the heart of the African continent and the countries of the region share the same destiny, with interconnected interests. China appreciates the efforts of the countries of the region to actively implement the Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSC) Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region and promote peace and stability in the region. At the same time, the countries of the region face numerous challenges in terms of addressing the threats posed by armed groups and attaining sustainable development. They need the assistance and support of the international community. I will emphasize the following four points.

First, we must continue to energetically implement the PSC Framework. China encourages the countries of the region to respect one another's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. They must build up political trust, strengthen good neighbourly relations and solve their differences through dialogue and consultations. We hope that the international community will, on the basis of respect for the sovereignty and opinion of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, help the country to implement political agreements, deepen the reform of the security sector, strengthen governance in the eastern areas of the country, promote national reconciliation and work to attain peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region.

Secondly, we must strengthen the security cooperation among countries of the region. China welcomes the cooperation among those countries in addressing the threats posed by armed groups. We encourage those countries to actively implement the Nairobi Declarations and expedite the repatriation of ex-M-23 combatants. We hope that the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will, in accordance with its mandate from the Security Council , play an active role in helping the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo to fight armed groups.

Thirdly, we must promote the economic development of the region. Poverty and underdevelopment are two of the fundamental causes behind the incessant conflicts of the Great Lakes Region. China calls upon the international community to increase its investment in countries of the region in the fields of agriculture, energy, infrastructure, communications and tourism, and promote the economic integration and interconnectedness among those countries, so that those countries can share the dividends of peace. We hope that the relevant donors will honour their assistance commitments and lend strong support to the countries of the region for their economic development and the improvement of peoples' livelihoods.

Fourthly, we must give full play to the role of regional and subregional organizations. The African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the East African Community enjoy unique advantages in solving the question of Burundi, the question of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other questions. All of those organizations have played important roles. China supports Africa in solving African problems in African ways. We support African regional and subregional organizations as they continue to promote the political settlement of regional hotspot issues through dialogue, mediation and good offices. We hope that the United Nations will strengthen its coordination with other African regional and subregional organizations so as to create synergies.

China has consistently supported the countries of the Great Lakes Region in their efforts to promote the peace process. On many occasions, China has dispatched its Special Representative for African Affairs to countries of the region for mediation. China participates actively in the peacekeeping operations of the United Nations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, while helping regional and subregional organizations to maintain peace in the region. We stand ready to work with the international community and will continue to play a constructive role in achieving peace and stability and promoting development in the Great Lakes Region.

**Mr. Lambertini** (Italy) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Djinnit, for his briefing to the Council. Italy welcomes his efforts, which have opened the door to positive results in terms of a reform process and the revitalization of the follow-up mechanism to the Partnership Africa Canada framework.

The active engagement of the Governments has proved the effectiveness of that mechanism. Of course, there is still a need to act, since we still have reason for concern. The Special Envoy has given us a clear depiction of the challenges that lie before us today. The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is critical. The bishops of the Congolese Catholic Church have decided to put an end to their mediation efforts. We supported their mediation efforts from the beginning, and we thank them for all that they have done.

President Kabila has appointed a new Prime Minister, who does not enjoy consensus support. That has led to a swift reaction by the opposition, which considers that appointment to be a non-event. Moreover, the Rassemblement des forces politiques et sociales de la République démocratique du Congo acquises au changement has called for mass demonstrations to protest that appointment. That shows us that the 31 December agreement provides the only possible road map for a political transition that is peaceful, credible and inclusive. The United Nations has already demonstrated its willingness to stand with the people of that country. It has already been recalled that the Council unanimously voted in favour of resolution 2348 (2017), which renewed the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), enabling the implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement and the electoral process.

This year could mark a turning point in the history of the country. We would like to launch an appeal to the political leaders in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Political leaders, both those in the Government and those in the opposition, have to demonstrate their sense of responsibility by renewing dialogue, and must allow themselves to be guided by the interests of the country and the aspirations of the people.

The security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is also of concern. Italy is watching with grave concern the increase in the theatres of instability in the country, and calls for an end to the violence targeting civilians. The serious situation in Kasai province in particular was condemned by the United Nations, the African Union, and the International Organization of la Francophonie. We are deeply concerned by the recent discovery of mass graves in that region. We encourage the relevant authorities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to undertake all the necessary measures to ensure that in-depth investigations are carried out in order to shed light on that episode.

We also recall that, as the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court stated, the aforementioned violence could constitute crimes that fall within the purview of the Court. In that regard, it is our wish that those responsible for the despicable murder of the two United Nations experts be brought to justice. Allow me to once again express our grief at the loss of Michael Sharp and Zaida Catalan, who contributed enormously to the work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Continuing our examination of the security aspect, we must, of course, consider the regional dimension. The reappearance of the Mouvement du 23 mars and the persistence in the east of such negative forces as the Alliance of Democratic Forces and the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda require strengthened regional cooperation so as to ensure that the progress achieved in the fight against those groups is not lost.

With regard to the presence of the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo — a situation that must be resolved quickly — we encourage all stakeholders to pursue dialogue in coordination with the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General. The fragility of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is reflected in other countries in the region. Chronic instability enables the illegal exploitation of and illicit trafficking in natural resources, feeding a vicious circle that also fuels armed groups.

In addition, instability continues to grow in terms of the number of refugees in the region. Beyond the traditional eastern border of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda has become the main host of refugees. There are now new inflows of refugees. In order to offer its assistance to the population in need in the Great Lakes region, the European Union yesterday announced funding amounting to €32 million. However, international assistance is not enough. In our view, we must encourage the countries of the region to adopt coordinated strategies aimed at promoting long-term solutions, while recalling the importance of obligations under the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the protocols thereto.

Although the Democratic Republic of the Congo is the cornerstone of stability in the region, there are other situations that require the attention of the Council. Here I would briefly turn to the subject of Burundi and reiterate our call to the countries of the region, which play an indispensable role in the inter-Burundian dialogue. The mediation process led by the East African Community (EAC) is significant in that regard, but requires the support of regional Powers in order to make progress. We have just received discouraging news. The summit of the Heads of State of the EAC, which was scheduled to take place on 28 April, has been postponed once again for unforeseen reasons. We hope that that was not due to the serious crisis in Burundi and that a specific date for that meeting will be set this week.

In conclusion, the complexity of the problem in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region requires a multidimensional response, which is provided by the African Union Peace and Security Council's Framework agreement for peace. It is a vital mechanism for stability in that corner of the African continent. While ensuring our support for the Special Envoy in his efforts to uphold that framework agreement, we encourage the countries of the region to continue to work to ensure its effectiveness. In particular, as stated by the representative of the African Union, we invite them to reactivate those various mechanisms in order to deal with the recent security developments.

**Mr. Aboulatta** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to express my appreciation for the valuable briefing given by Mr. Said Djinnit, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, and for his relentless efforts to develop cooperation among the States of the region.

The Great Lakes region is in the heart of the African continent. Therefore, building peace in the region will have an impact on the development and stability of the entire continent. Despite their considerable capacities, the States of the region continue to face tremendous security, stability, democracy and development challenges. Most prominent among those challenges are armed groups, which are the main obstacle to State authority and which pose a great threat to the lives of civilians. They also play a role in stealing natural wealth, thereby depriving the people of the region of a significant development resource. Moreover, the humanitarian situation is a source of serious concern, with the presence of a great number of refugees and displaced persons.

Egypt believes that efforts to face those challenges require, first and foremost, cooperation among the States of the region, in line with their collective responsibility to work to achieve stability. Nationally owned sustainable solutions must also be sought through the promotion of regional and international partnerships, in particular with the African Union and the United Nations.

Therefore, and in line with our position as a co-opted member of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, we hosted a high-level workshop on 27 February in Cairo. Many ministers and officials of the States of the region participated, along with representatives of the United Nations, the African Union and other regional organizations. In the discussions on a global response to threats to peace and security in the Great Lakes region, emphasis was placed on three key areas.

The first was to address current challenges and proactively exploit opportunities to transform the region into one of stability and prosperity. The most fundamental of those opportunities is provided by the ongoing political processes, such as those in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and the Central African Republic. Those processes enjoy great attention from the international community. Moreover, there is a considerable institutional structure and a valid political framework for cooperation among the States of the region, which should be put to use.

The second area of focus was the role of peacekeeping operations and sustaining peace, especially given that the region hosts a great number of such operations. The workshop stressed the importance of developing and ensuring the consistency of peacekeeping-operation mandates, so that they align with the actual needs of the countries concerned at the various phases and can help to preserve and build peace in line with the relevant principles, thereby laying a strong foundation for sustainable peace. Diverse and integrated regional efforts, as well as security, political, development and humanitarian tools, are also of importance.

Lastly, the workshop stressed the importance of promoting the role of society in conflict settlement and peaceful coexistence, including in the fight against terrorism and extremism, and in efforts to prevent new fighters from joining armed groups, in mediation, and in promoting the role of women and young people in peacebuilding frameworks. We stress the importance of the Peace and Security Council Framework agreement in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region. It is the basic framework for stability. We also agree that the States of the region should commit to the Framework agreement and continue their efforts.

On the other hand, several developments require the attention of the international community, including the hurdles facing the African initiative to eradicate the Lord's Resistance Army after several regional actors and partners announced that they wanted to withdraw from that initiative. The situation calls for an ongoing dialogue among the members of the initiative so as to overcome those hurdles and prevent the loss of the progress achieved in efforts to halt that movement. Moreover, the growing security challenges in the Democratic Republic of the Congo attest to the great responsibility of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and in that regard we need to provide the Mission with the necessary capacities and resources.

At the political level, we are fully confident in the ability of the Congolese people to get through this critical crossroads. We take note of the latest developments, especially the appointment by the new President of a Prime Minister and the reactions to that decision by various political forces. We stress that all parties should shoulder their responsibilities, give priority to the national interests and settle their differences. That will enable the full implementation of the political agreement of 31 December and national concord. We also stress the important role of international and regional partners in helping the Congolese parties to overcome their differences, and of the good will of the African Union and the region.

With regard to the situation in Burundi, despite the progress in the security situation there is no alternative to a sustainable political solution through a comprehensive national dialogue in line with the mediation of the East African Community. We also call on the international community to pay heed to the economic and humanitarian consequences of the conflict in the country and to establish a constructive dialogue between Burundi and its partners. We stress the importance of the role of the Peacebuilding Commission, which has assisted in putting together the Government and its partners and in building trust.

Egypt presides over the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we want to promote the role of that committee, which seeks to ensure stability and security in the country. In that regard, we express our deep condolences to the families of the two experts who lost their lives in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

**Mr. Fesko** (Ukraine): I join other colleagues in thanking the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region, Mr. Said Djinnit, for his briefing on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSC) Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

Ukraine welcomes the efforts and commitments of the parties to the Framework with regard to its further implementation, which they demonstrated during the reporting period. In addition, we commend the efforts undertaken by regional organizations, in particular the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Southern African Development Community and the African Union (AU).

Nevertheless, we are concerned that some of the priority provisions remain unimplemented. On the one hand, we have statements on the part of all parties to the PSC Framework regarding their readiness to implement those provisons. On the other, we see a lack of meaningful action — and by that I mean collective actions by all actors. Hence, the absence of a political will to comply with the promises and obligations made is a root cause of the delayed implementation of the PSC Framework.

That factor creates distrust among all regional members and provokes tensions among them. As a result, at the beginning of the year, an incursion of former Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) elements into the Democratic Republic of the Congo led to an exchange of accusations between the two neighbouring countries regarding their alleged failure to uphold regional commitments in the PSC Framework. To prevent the repetition of that situation in the future, Ukraine urges all signatories of the Nairobi Declarations to accelerate their efforts to resolve the issue of the M-23 as soon as possible.

The importance of such actions is highlighted by the fact that the Democratic Republic of the Congo is currently preparing to conduct long-awaited presidential, parliamentary and provincial elections in 2017. The challenges posed by the non-implementation of all of the provisions of the PSC Framework should not undermine or impede that process. In that regard, we believe that all regional actors should make it a priority to eliminate the threat of the Allied Democratic Forces and the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

There is also an urgent need to resolve the issue of the presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo of combatants of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition. We commend the readiness of the President of Uganda, Mr. Yoweri Museveni, to host those combatants who wish to relocate to Uganda, and urge the Government of South Sudan to consider that option as a possible way out of that situation.

We are also counting on the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to address, in a proper way, the new threat that recently emerged in the Kasai province, namely, the activities of the Kamiuna Nsapu gang, which allegedly killed two members of the United Nations Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In addition, we urge the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to spare no effort in investigating all human rights violations and abuses in that region, committed by both State and non-State actors, and to bring those responsible to account.

Two weeks ago (see S/PV.7910), the Security Council considered the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and adapted the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the current realities and challenges in the country.

In the context of the political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we want to express our concern regarding the recent appointment of Mr. Bruno Tshibala as Prime Minister of the country. As was clearly stipulated in the political agreement of 31 December, the opposition was given the prerogative of picking a candidate for the prime ministerial post. Thus, that appointment may, in our view, further exacerbate the political tensions among all stakeholders. We urge all national stakeholders to comply with their obligations under the agreement.

Another challenge in the region is the human rights situation in Burundi and the influx of Burundians into neighbouring countries. We are deeply disappointed that serious human rights violations and abuses continue, including killings, gender-based violence, arbitrary arrests and detentions, particularly of children, torture and ill-treatment, the intimidation of civil-society organizations and journalists, as well as restrictions on fundamental freedoms in that country. In our view, the lack of serious efforts to investigate human rights abuses and overcome the climate of impunity in the country only encourages perpetrators to commit new crimes. Ukraine also calls on the Government of Burundi to follow the example of the Gambia and South Africa, which reversed their previous decision to withdraw from the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

The refugee crisis is a one of the main indicators of the worsening political and security situation in Burundi and in neighbouring countries. That situation requires urgent action aimed at delivering adequate assistance and at providing shelter and other necessary support to the vulnerable, including basic social services, ensuring child protection, the tackling of sexual and gender-based violence and helping people with special needs.

It is quite upsetting that the situation in Burundi is worsening, while the implementation of key elements of Security Council resolution 2303 (2016) has stalled.

We believe that increasing the human rights monitoring capacity and establishing a police component, as envisaged by resolution 2303 (2016), including the AU deployment of human rights observers and military experts, is urgently needed in order to reinforce peace-restoration efforts in Burundi.

**Mr. Bermúdez** (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Said Djinnit, for having taken the time to meet with the Security Council this morning. I also thank him for his presentation of the Secretary General's report (S/2017/208).

Four years after the adoption of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, Uruguay wishes to recognize the efforts and commitments of the signatory parties and the guarantor organizations as they work to implement the provisions of the agreement. High-level meetings have taken place over recent months, including the seventh high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, held last November in Angola. They testify to the timeliness and relevance of the provisions of the Framework agreement as a political and diplomatic platform for addressing the challenges facing the Great Lakes region. I would also like to commend the Governments of the Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Uganda for offering to host the eighth and ninth high-level meetings, this year and the next, respectively, which will help to maintain political momentum on the issue.

However, despite some progress in implementing the agreement, it should be noted that we continue to see very complex political, security and humanitarian challenges to peace and sustainable security in the Great Lakes region. We share the Special Envoy's view that what has been achieved so far may be negatively affected by the continued presence of non-State armed groups, mainly in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We are concerned about the appearance since August 2016 of a new militia, inspired by the Kamuina Nsapu chieftaincy and led by Jean-Pierre Mpandi, that is especially active in Kasai, Kasai-Central, Kasai-Oriental and Lomami. It is particularly violent and has been recruiting minors under 14 years old, some of whom have been given drugs. In theory, this group was also responsible for the murder of United Nations experts Michael Sharp and Zaida Catalan, to whom the Security Council paid tribute on 31 March (see S/PV.7910). However, the crackdown in response has been extremely tough and at times excessive and in situations such as have been described, the civilian population feels terrorized, seemingly defenceless and trapped between two equally hostile forces. The commitment and concerted action of all the countries that are signatories to the Framework agreement will be essential if the destabilizing actions of armed groups such as I just mentioned is to be effectively addressed.

The humanitarian situation in the Great Lakes region is also very worrying, especially in South Sudan, where it is simply a disaster. But there are also other countries in the region, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and the Central African Republic, that are still facing serious humanitarian problems, with millions of people displaced and whose most basic humanitarian needs are not being addressed. I would like to commend the tireless efforts of the thousands of humanitarian workers who have put their lives in the service of peace and the effort to save the lives of millions of civilians.

On the political front, we have still not seen concrete results from the dialogue processes ongoing in various countries in the region. We should emphasize how vital it is to ensure in every case that the political dialogue is inclusive, transparent and peaceful but, most importantly, that it is genuine and conducted in good faith by all the interested parties. At the same time, it should also guarantee the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. We must never stop emphasizing the fact that dialogue is the only possible way to resolve differences. Uruguay would also like to commend all the mediation and facilitation efforts being made by eminent people working on behalf of Africa's regional and subregional organizations. However, the Security Council must remain vigilant and condemn any violations of human rights that could further provoke the parties in conflict and work directly to prevent armed clashes — the effective prevention of conflict that we all want.

In conclusion, Uruguay urges the Governments of the region and the international community as a whole to come together to promote political and social stability of the Great Lakes region through the full implementation of the commitments undertaken by the signatories to the Framework agreement.

**Mr. Temenov** (Kazakhstan): We would like to thank Mr. Said Djinnit, the Special Envoy of the

Secretary-General, for his briefing today, as well as for his untiring commitment to seeing stability in the Great Lakes region.

Kazakhstan commends the ongoing efforts of the signatory countries to implement the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, which is vital to achieving stability in the Great Lakes. We welcome the signatories' growing ownership of the efforts to implement the Framework and realize the ongoing reforms. Any prolongation of the political impasse in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi could turn the acute tensions into full-fledged conflict.

Maintaining the momentum and positive dynamics of the current political processes will be crucial to stabilizing the situation in the region. That depends on the political will of the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi. We note the recent appointment of a new Prime Minister in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, it has led to a swift reaction from the opposition, and the consultations between President Kabila and the Rassemblement should therefore continue. Where Burundi is concerned, we believe it should continue its dialogue with the opposition through the good offices of the East African Community-led dialogue facilitator and with the broad engagement of the European Union and the United Nations.

The growing violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo caused by the incursions into the country of former elements of the Mouvement du 23 mars and by clashes in the Kasai and Tanganyika regions, as well as the presence of illegal armed groups. These remain the chief threats to the security not only of the country but of the entire region. We hope that the recent priorities introduced into the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the reforms of the Mission itself, will help to improve the security situation on the ground, especially in the light of the country's upcoming elections.

The humanitarian situation on the ground is dire and closely tied to the area's political and security instability and prevailing lack of development. We commend the efforts of the Governments and their peoples in the region in hosting refugees and internally displaced persons, and encourage the international community and regional and subregional organizations to increase their support to those host countries.

Kazakhstan supports the countries of the region in organizing the forthcoming African Great Lakes Conference in Uganda. It is clear that a shared, comprehensive approach involving political dialogue and close cooperation among all the States of the region is the only way to achieve peace and security in the Great Lakes.

**Mr. Skoog** (Sweden): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2017/208) and his Special Envoy, Mr. Said Djinnit, for his briefing today and his efforts to see the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region implemented. I would also like to commend him for exercising his good offices and advocating with regional partners, as well as his efforts to include meaningful participation by women peacemakers in the implementation of the Framework.

The situation in the Great Lakes region remains volatile and unstable. Many of the challenges are transnational, transcending national borders. Violations of international humanitarian law and abuses of human rights, carried out with impunity, contribute to the cycles of conflict. The scale of displacement, with 9.5 million refugees and internally displaced persons, is a clear indication of the political and security challenges that still plague the region. It is clear that a regional approach is needed if the interconnected nature of the crisis is to be addressed. The Great Lakes region has witnessed some success in its integration in recent years, especially in terms of trade and economic activity. We also commend the generosity and solidarity of the people and countries of the region in hosting their displaced neighbours, often for very long periods. However, more must be done to overcome the obstacles to peace and stability facing the region and to come to terms with the armed groups in the area, including through improved implementation of the Framework.

We are deeply concerned by the continued and increased levels of violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as by the deteriorating humanitarian situation there. There is a risk that political uncertainty and the lack of progress in the implementation of the comprehensive political agreement of 31 December 2016 will exacerbate instability. That includes the situation in the east and the activity by armed groups; the resurgence of the Mouvement du 23 mars M23 is one such example. The Council has repeatedly and clearly signalled to the Congolese parties how important it is that they implement their agreement. That includes the need for a transitional Government supported by all the parties in order to prepare for elections. The legitimacy of the Government is linked to respect for the agreement. The active participation of women, including in the elections, also adds both legitimacy and sustainability to the political process.

Regional actors have an essential role to play in moving the political process forward. We welcome the efforts of the Southern African Development Community to support progress in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A visit by representatives of the Southern African Development Community's Organ on Politics, Defence and Security has the potential to provide momentum for the implementation of the New Year's Eve agreement and that momentum is urgently needed. The Regional Oversight Mechanism meeting in Luanda in 2016 and the African Union Peace and Security Council statement in support of the reactivation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region and the Nairobi Declarations-related mechanism to deal with the security challenges in the region are examples of positive regional efforts. Influential regional actors should coordinate so as to ensure coherent messages. It is important that the Security Council provide backing for and align itself with such efforts. We should support Mr. Djinnit's efforts in the same way.

Constructive regional engagement in Burundi by the East African Community (EAC) deserves full support, in particular the inter-Burundian dialogue under the Mediator, President Museveni, and the Facilitator, Mr. Mkapa. An EAC summit, including on the situation in Burundi, at the earliest possible time, is important, as it would add further momentum to the quest for stability and progress in Burundi. Meanwhile, the political and human rights situation continues to cause concern. It is therefore important for agreements to be reached to allow for the full functioning of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and African Union military and human rights observers.

Despite some progress, the challenges in the Great Lakes region remain significant. The international community remains committed. However, ultimately it will up to the countries of the region to find peaceful solutions. We must fully support the constructive actions of regional actors who seek to move the region beyond insecurity, uncertainty and political division.

**Mr. Fernández Revollo** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Plurinational State of Bolivia welcomes the briefing by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mr Said Djinnit, and thanks him for the arduous efforts that he and his team have made to meet the challenges of maintaining peace and security in the region.

In recent years, owing to multidimensional factors, namely, wars of decolonialization, the arbitrary or artificial nature of borders established in colonies, the serious conflicts spawned by the Cold War, which included wars of secession and conflicting state interests and civil wars caused by economic factors and fuelled by external actors, an environment replete with conflicts and wars has emerged in the brotherly continent of Africa. Such multidimensional factors were mentioned by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan in his report to the Security Council (S/1998/318), published in April 1998, on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. The report cited natural resources as the main cause of conflict. They have been and will continue to be key determinants in the spread of socioeconomic conflicts through the financing of armed groups and the control of countries and their populations.

The Great Lakes region, which is one of the world's richest in natural resources, is an example of an environment created by large multinationals and international consortiums that undermine State capacity by encouraging the purchase of diamonds, copper, cobalt, coltan and other resources that are mined illegally by armed groups, which fuels wars by providing such groups with the means to perpetuate conflict. In that regard, Bolivia voices its concern about the illegal activities of armed groups in the region, such as the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, the Allied Democratic Forces, the Lord's Resistance Army and the reappearance of former members of the Mouvement du 23 mars, as well as inter-ethnic conflicts in various areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which all undermine efforts to foster stability and security.

At the same time, insecurity and violence have continued to heighten tensions in the region, resulting in many deaths. During the reporting period of the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2017/208), published in March, Burundi's Environment Minister was murdered at the beginning of 2017, and in Uganda, on the border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a clash occurred between security forces and local militia groups, which left at least 87 people dead.

We are also concerned about the humanitarian situation in the region, which makes the conflicts increasingly complex. There are more than 6 million internally displaced persons and 3.5 million refugees — considered to be the most vulnerable population groups. Despite the major conflict, Bolivia is optimistic about the outcome of efforts by regional and international associations, whose goal is to provide ongoing and coordinated support for the implementation of agreements that have been brokered primarily in order to build on the Nairobi Declarations, the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, which are all connected to the United Nations Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework 2016-2017. The priority is to encourage dialogue, the neutralization of armed groups, the promotion of the rights of women and young people, and civil-society participation. We highlight the progress made in preparing for elections in the brotherly countries of Angola, Kenya, Rwanda and, in particular, the promise by the Democratic Republic of the Congo that presidential elections will be held at the end of 2017 in an inclusive political process.

In conclusion, with regard to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of the countries of the Great Lakes region, we encourage all parties and the international community, as a whole, to continue to assist with technical support and economic and humanitarian cooperation by pooling their efforts to achieve stability and lasting peace through a process of disarmament, dialogue, reconciliation and reintegration.

**Mr. Wilson** (United Kingdom): I thank you, Madam President, for convening today's important meeting and for maintaining the Security Council's focus on conflict prevention in Africa. I join others in thanking Special Envoy Said Djinnit for his briefing, but also for the critical role that he has played in keeping preventive diplomacy active and in including women in peace processes, as already mentioned by the representative of Sweden and others.

As Mr. Djinnit and others have made clear today, the Great Lakes region continues to face many challenges. In response, it is clear that a structured approach to regional stability is needed. We support work to reform and reinvigorate the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. It needs needs active engagement from its members and guarantors to have high impact, and that impact, as we have heard, is vital.

Today I personally want to focus on two countries in the region, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi.

As we heard last month, the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains deeply troubling. I pay tribute to the Conférence nationale épiscopale du Congo for its mediation efforts, but it is up to the Government and the opposition to deliver the 31 December agreement in letter and in spirit, with purposeful speed. What we have actually seen is stalling and obfuscation, particularly by the Government. This is not only hindering implementation of the agreement, but also is distracting attention from the real prize that is at stake: peaceful and credible elections to take place this year, enabling the first democratic transition of power in the country's history.

Sadly, the obstacles to this goal go beyond inertia. The appointment of a new Prime Minister by President Kabila last week was an active step, and I agree with France that it is a worrying one. It went against both the spirit and the letter of the agreement. This appointment will not help to restore the broad national consensus that lies at the heart of the agreement. Until that consensus is built, the uncertainty of the politics of the Democratic Republic of the Congo risks being mirrored in the security situation, which continues to deteriorate.

We are particularly concerned about the increase in violence and reports of atrocities in the Kasai region. This underlines the importance of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the Joint Human Rights Office investigating violations and abuses of human rights and international law. Those who commit human rights violations must be held to account.

We are also concerned about the ongoing threat from armed groups, including the resurgence of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We reiterate the need for dialogue, not just a military effort, in order to tackle armed groups. The resumption of talks between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the M23 is vital, as is the implementation of the Nairobi declarations and the repatriation of M23 and Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda rebels. We support the Special Envoy and his efforts to make progress on these issues.

The presence of Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition elements in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is destabilizing. We welcome the efforts by Special Representative Sidikou as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to find a solution and their engagement with regional partners. We need to find a regional solution urgently to avoid exacerbating tensions in fragile local communities. We ask that the Secretariat keep the Council updated.

Turning to the concerning situation in Burundi, the regime claims that normality is returning to the country. It is not. A climate of fear persists as disappearances, arbitrary arrests and killings continue almost daily. The Government still shows no sign of acting in the interests of its people and seems to be concerned only with clinging onto power. Moves by President Nkurunziza to enable him to remain in power for a fourth term, and possibly beyond, risk bringing the country to the brink once again.

The Government's refusal to engage with the international community is especially worrying, and some of the language and activity of the Imbonerakure, as others have said earlier in this meeting, is truly horrific. Here, in this open meeting, I call on the Government of Burundi to participate fully in the talks being led by former President Mkapa. These talks, which must be open and sincere, as France has said, remain the best hope of resolving the crisis peacefully. We urge the Government to enable implementation of resolution 2303 (2016) and to allow the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to conduct its work without hindrance and cooperate fully with the commission of inquiry which was mandated by the Human Rights Council. I agree with Egypt and Sweden that the Peacebuilding Commission has an important role to play in all of this.

We know how difficult it is to bring peace and stability to a country or region after conflict, but we also know that it can be done and that there is nothing inevitable about the future. The Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi can step back from their current courses; they can take decisions in the interests of their people, and they can avoid bloodshed and instability in this very fragile region.

It is the duty of all countries in the Council to support that course and to do all we can to implement our own resolutions. Given the significance that Ethiopia has already talked about in terms of the wider strategic posture in this region, it is really important that we all do our best right now.

**The President**: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the United States.

I thank Special Envoy Djinnit for his work to advance the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

Two weeks ago, we renewed the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). That vote was an important step in reinvigorating efforts to set the Democratic Republic of the Congo on a path towards a democratic transition of power. That is the only way to ensure the long-term stability of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Certainly the challenges in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are immense, and we are deeply disturbed by the violence and reports of mass graves in the Kasais.

We recognize the importance of investigating these atrocities and urge the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to work with and not act as an impediment to MONUSCO and other relevant parts of the United Nations to swiftly conduct these investigations. We are also deeply disappointed by the lack of progress in the implementation of the 31 December political agreement between the Government and the opposition. We continue to support this agreement, which represents the best path forward for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including for ensuring upcoming elections and a peaceful transition of power. The United States continues to urge both the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the opposition to resolve outstanding issues, make concessions and work constructively in the implementation of the agreement.

It remains clear that our collective efforts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be matched with strong simultaneous efforts to address all the regional sources of instability. Now more than ever we need the focus of Special Envoy Djinnit to be on addressing problems related to the armed groups operating in the region and the legacies of past conflicts. In this regard, we appreciate the efforts made over the past six months to reform the Government structures of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and to reinvigorate its implementation. We are also pleased that there have been some improvements in relations among the Great Lakes countries, most notably between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda.

However, we share the concern of the Secretary-General, as mentioned in his recent report (S/2017/208), that the continued presence of armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the wider region pose acute challenges. In the last six months, we have seen Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) and South Sudanese fighters cross into the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These militants are in addition to Allied Democratic Forces, Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda and Lord's Resistance Army fighters, and numerous local militias that are already operating in the region. Their arrival in the Democratic Republic of the Congo comes at a time of increasing inter-ethnic violence.

We echo the Secretary-General's call for the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the leadership of the former M23 to resume their implementation of the Nairobi declaration and ask Special Envoy Djinnit to redouble his efforts in support of these and other efforts aimed at reducing the threat of armed groups.

Now is the time to advance the agreements and processes that chart a path towards peace.

We must see honest, good-faith efforts by all countries in the region to repatriate combatants and stop support for armed groups. The problems are there, and they are at risk of growing.

In our focus on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we must not lose sight of continuing challenges in Burundi. We are grateful to President Mkapa for his facilitation of the inter-Burundian dialogue, but stronger and more sustained leadership from the region will be necessary to generate the pressure needed on both sides to make the dialogue a success and ensure that the crisis in Burundi does not become an increasing source of instability for the region. The current situation in Burundi is not sustainable or acceptable.

We know that Special Envoy Djinnit has a very challenging job. We will continue to work with him and our allies to advanced stability in the Great Lakes region, but those efforts cannot advance without strong and consistent engagement from the region. I urge him to continue engaging all of the stakeholders in the region to reinforce the importance of following through on the commitments that they have made. We are here to make things work, and, if they do not work, we need to change them.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

**Mr. Gata Mavita wa Lufuta** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me, Madam President, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April, and to say how honoured we are to see the United States of America, a friendly country, preside over today's meeting. I would also like to thank you for having taken the initiative of convening this meeting on the Great Lakes region and the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. I would also like thank all members of the Security Council for the exemplary readiness and determination that they have always shown on every occasion when they have been called upon to consider the situation in my country.

We appreciate the report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/208) on the implementation of the agreement on the Framework that Mr. Said Djinnit, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, whose presence I welcome, just presented to us. Although the report does not, in general, make any major observations, for our part we would like, nevertheless, to briefly make several comments that my delegation deems important.

With regard to the security situation, the Secretary-General's report highlights the efforts of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, working in cooperation with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), to neutralize foreign and domestic armed groups. My delegation would like to reassure the Council that those efforts will continue until the those groups are totally eradicated.

The report also acknowledges the relevance of the Congolese Government's request to MONUSCO to rapidly evacuate elements of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition who remain on Congolese territory, while at the same time underlining the situation concerning members of the Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda who are cantoned in three sites and continue to wait to be repatriated to their countries of origin or sent to a third host country. It is important that the Council devote attention to those two situations, which continue to be of concern for my country, instead of deferring them to other countries in the region.

Within the framework of the commitments obligating the countries of the region not to harbour or, under any circumstances, provide protection to persons accused of war crimes, crimes against humanity, acts of genocide and crimes of aggression, or to persons under a United Nations sanctions regime, and to facilitate the administration of justice through judicial cooperation in the region, my country has apprehended various high-level leaders of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) sought by international justice, who have been extradited to Rwanda through MONUSCO. Among the names of those high-level persons to be held accountable, one can cite those of General Léopold Mujyambere, Colonel Félicien Nsanzubukire, Colonel Mucebo Habyarimana, Colonel Anastase Munyaneza, Major Vainqueur Nzabimana, Captain Théophile Twagiramungu, Captain Ladislas Ntanganzwa and Mr. Martin Gatabazi .

On the other hand, several international arrest warrants submitted to other countries in the region by the Democratic Republic of the Congo within the framework of regional judicial cooperation in pursuit of Congolese nationals who are the alleged perpetrators of crimes against humanity and war crimes remain outstanding. Yet those individuals continue not only to move about freely within neighbouring countries, but are also carrying out destabilizing activities directed against my country. Iin that context, especially concerning members of the former Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23), the Democratic Republic of the Congo reaffirms its determination to fulfil its commitments under the Framework agreement signed at Addis Ababa and calls on the other parties to the agreement, in particular Uganda and Rwanda, to do the same.

During previous Security Council meetings, my delegation has spoken at length on the subject of the M-23. I believe that it is useful to resume that discussion by saying that the efforts taken by my Government, which have gone so far as to propose to members of M-23 their unconditional repatriation, have not achieved their goal, due to the refusal of the leadership of that movement, which took the former rebels hostage, and to a lack of genuine cooperation with the neighbouring countries that are lodging them. That is why my country has always asked for the Council's involvement, so as to make such cooperation possible with a view to definitively resolving that situation.

Concerning the political situation, after the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo reported on its mission to the President of the Republic, as everyone knows, he endeavoured to undertake consultations with the political opposition and the presidential majority. At the conclusion of those consultations, based on the proposals made to him by the Rassemblement des forces politiques et sociales de la République démocratique du Congo acquises au changement, he appointed on 7 April — in keeping the promise made in his speech given before Congress — Mr. Bruno Tshibala to the post of Prime Minister. Mr. Tshibala is a member of the Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social — the party of the late Étienne Tshisekedi — and of the Rassemblement. The latter is already conducting consultations, so as to put together a Government of national unity in the coming days. My delegation believes that the Council must refrain from becoming involved in the conflict within the Rassemblement, the ins and outs of which the Council is not familiar with. In favouring one faction of the Rassemblement, as some members have just done, they risk reigniting the conflict.

Moreover, my delegation would like to draw the attention of the Council to the fact that the political agreement of 31 December 2016 does not replace the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Defended yesterday in the Chamber by a large number of Council members, the political agreement of 31 December 2016 only regulates a temporary situation linked to the elections, while legitimacy and the source of power rest in the Constitution.

With regard to the Conseil national de suivi de l'accord, the President of the Republic has asked the relevant stakeholders to make a concerted effort to appoint staff quickly by consensus.

Before concluding, we believe that it is important to point out that the political opposition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is governed by article 8 of the Constitution, and that its status is determined by statute. Consequently, paragraph 65 of the report, which designates as the head of the Congolese opposition an individual who has not been designated as such by the opposition parties or recognized by the law has no place in the report.

In conclusion, I should like to reaffirm that the Government and the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo place much hope in the Addis Ababa agreement on the Framework — a hope to build a lasting peace, promote harmonious coexistence with the countries of the region and place the foundations of stability for all our States without which it is difficult to pave the way forward for regional and mutually advantageous cooperation. That is why my country will always remain attached to the agreement and will pursue its implementation so that it can truly achieve the objectives for which it was conceived.

*The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.*